

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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THE DEAR GIRL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "BELLA DONNA," "NEVER FORGOTTEN," &c.

CHAPTER IX. THE NEW ARRIVAL.

MR. BLACKER'S private trumpeting on behalf of his new friends—the captain coarsely called it "touting"—had been attended with such success, that when the hour for Prado drew near and the packet was not an hour off, the Port had become unnaturally crowded, and then a buzz and hum of voices to this tune and key: "Have you seen them? Rolling in gold. The nicest people in the world. Very highly connected. Going to spend a long time here." Presently, those passing and repassing, four and three abreast, were excited by knowing that the moment had come. Mr. Blacker appeared in charge of a party—new faces, new figures, new dresses; waving, and flourishing, and pointing, and declaiming. He was in great spirits, radiant with pride and proprietorship. Curiosity in the community was always allowed to gratify itself without regard to restraint. Every one might rush, crowd, or stare as eagerly as they pleased. Voices were not lowered, and the strangers heard distinctly as they passed by, "There they are! Those are they!" They walked on with the indifference of perfect good breeding, perhaps a little amused and smiling, as all "nice" well-bred people are. The tall and "prince-like" Mr. Guernsey Beaufort and his brother Ernest—two about as fine and elegant men as had ever appeared at Dieppe—attracted all eyes; and the scorn and contempt with which the latter looked round on every one and everything showed the true club man and man of fashion, and was the real guarantee for their elegance and respectability. Mrs. Beaufort, too,—a pale graceful woman, with a shawl draped about her—swept along on her husband's arm, looking gently about, and the ladies of the colony felt with an instinct that here was a secret reserve—the reserve of true breeding—which would keep them at a distance. She had her little girl—a charming, elegant, well brought up little thing—walking beside her.

"You see them all now," said Mr. Blacker, flourishing and doing the panorama-describer's part. "Of course this is the public ground," he added,

to them, apologising for the mixture, "and it is not considered anything, meeting in this way; and of course it leads to nothing. By the way, I see, coming down, some very fair, well-conducted people—I mean the Harcourt Dacres, one of the good Irish families. He's a *very* clever fellow—in Cases, you know, he—Yes, I think there would be no harm in—Dacres, a word with you."

It was Mr. Dacres and his daughter, with Mr. West, that were coming up. People who were not too absorbed by the great excitement of the evening had noticed the change in Mr. West's face, and some one said "he looked twenty years younger." He had indeed lost the reflective, dry, almost dissatisfied look which was his characteristic, and he seemed overflowing with spirits and happiness, and indeed his own natural age, if not some years younger. The new and distinguished comers remarked him. "Oh," said the clergyman, waving him off, "one of the set, you know. They keep up a sort of position here, and all that; but a little unpleasant to deal with. *You* understand me, Mrs. Beaufort? You know all this sort of thing. Dacres, one word." And he seized that gentleman by the arm. "See here, Dacres." Then, in a melodramatic whisper, he poured into his ear, "Really charming people—first society. Mr. Harcourt Dacres, Miss Dacres, let me introduce Mr. Guernsey Beaufort."

This ceremony was watched by many eager faces. Mr. Blacker was almost agitated as he went through this chamberlain's function. The parties then joined. Mrs. Beaufort looked with interest towards Lucy, as indeed every one did who met her. The fashionable lady's face grew softer, and seemed, among all the false countenances about her, to have lighted on something that sympathised. The two in a moment separated, and with the little girl walked behind. Mr. Dacres was delighted. He loved new faces and good people. His countenance mantled with cordiality, and bonhomie seemed to stream from his mouth. "Men of the world, sir," he would say, "understand each other instantly. You and I, Mr. Beaufort, put up with all this, because it suits us. It's a poor place, Heaven knows; but we run hither and thither just as fashion bids us. You and I know how a well-known marchioness will go into a cabin we'd be ashamed to put our man-servant in, if it's the right thing to do it. And I can tell you

a good deal of fun goes on here in its way. There are the queerest, most comical set of souls in the universe. It's worth the while of a man like you, Mr. Beaufort, coming here for a time, to see a bit of character. I run over here myself, now and again, to see my girl and wife, and I find it *impayable*, for the stories and all that sort of thing I pick up as I go. Capital schools here, too. My little girl is just leaving Miss Pringle's, where she has been well grounded, I assure you. Quite a finish, you know, you don't get at home."

Now came up the Dalrymples. "Very nice, correct people. I was telling you of them, you know. Perfectly safe to know. Not exactly reduced; but, a——Mrs. Dalrymple, let me——" And the form was gone through with all the solemnities. The faded lady, in the sweeping shawl, seemed to find comfort in the good-natured, all but homely manner of Mrs. Dalrymple, and "took to her" at once.

"Pon my word," said Mr. Blacker, looking round with pride at his work, "our party *has* increased!"

It had. The commons of the place looked at and followed them with fresh curiosity. Mr. Blacker waving his arms and describing, with his head very much back; the two matrons already confidential; the Beaufort daughter and Mr. Ernest Beaufort keeping aloof contemptuously from the other ladies; and our Lucy almost ignored. Mr. Daeres was soaring up fast into his best circuit vein, and, with his face mantling with joviality, was telling "a capital thing," taking in the ladies right and left, and even those behind him. He delighted in new people and new audiences, and was now quite at home.

Mr. West and Lucy had dropped behind. Both felt they were outside all this. They were of the class of natures which are too delicately organised to "hit it off" with strangers, and to be at home in a moment with all the world.

"I cannot endure that man," Mr. West said to her. "He jars on me at every turn. It is he who makes this place worse than it would be."

"Mr. Blacker?" said Lucy; "surely there is no harm in him?"

"Perhaps not," said he, smiling. "I always think that the people with no harm in them, do the most harm."

"Oh," said Lucy, sadly, "it seems to me every day, now that I have done with the school, to be worse. It is a dreadful place, and I wish we were far away out of it. Papa and we all would be so much happier established at some quiet, sweet, little English country place."

They were a long way behind now. West looked round hastily. "And why should this not be?" he said. "It is indeed no place for you or for *him*. The very air is corrupted. Their false patience, their miserable acting, the crowd of knaves—the men and women that herd

together here—sicken me. It is like living in a moral pestilence."

"But you stay here?" said Lucy, quickly. "You can be free if you like. A philosopher like you!" But, as soon as the words escaped her, she recollected and coloured.

He said hurriedly, "Perhaps I cannot, though I ought, indeed. My poor sister would rather be away a million times. She is pining for home. I myself loathe the place; and yet I stay—selfishly, I know, but still I cannot help it. Can you guess the reason?"

Lucy looked at him with full and trustful eyes. "Well—I——" she answered, "I do know it."

"And you call it folly, selfishness, absurdity, a foolish dream?"

She paused a moment, and then said softly, "No, I do not think so, since you have asked me. Far from it."

"Your father and I," he went on very quickly, "had a conversation to-day. I told him what has long been on my mind. Now let me speak plainly for myself. Things will grow worse and worse. This is but the beginning. Your poor father is helpless, and I have met enough of men of his life to know that the troubles he has passed through are but a hint of what are to come. In such a prospect I think of you—of what is to become of you later, and of him. Friends will fall away, miseries of all sorts will set in; then you *must* have a friend. Some one to turn to and protect you—and *him*," he added.

"I have thought of all this; but you cannot think me so mercenary as to suppose I would let such motives influence me. No. You must consider I am only a mere school-girl, and that I hardly know how to form a judgment on things of the world. This has come on me very suddenly. So that you must not think my hesitation is owing to any disinclination or dislike. Will you agree to this? Give me a little time to accustom myself to the idea, to appreciate it as I ought; and I assure you, at the same moment, that I cannot say how I admire your talent, and virtues, and—I can tell you, too—that there is no one else, as, indeed, you may guess, whom I care for."

Mr. West's face was growing brighter and younger every moment. "These are words I never dared to dream of listening to. I understand it all. I see perfectly what you are thinking of. Any time—weeks, months, years, if you like. It is only natural. And I shall add this condition, and, if you will let me, insist on it. As this step would, I most firmly believe, be all for your happiness and comfort, so I should wish, for the same view, that you should not consider yourself at all bound, but shall be free to change when you please. As you say," he added, smiling, "you have only just left Miss Pringle's. You have to see something of the world and its gaieties—even such gaieties as we have here. You must be free. Who knows what may come in your way? No, I am more than satisfied. And if you still think the same

at the time, why you know it will be the greater glory and happiness for me."

"Whatever you please," she said earnestly. "And I will add a little condition of my own. You know what sort of a place this is—how they talk—"

"Just what I was going to say. Our little compact shall be kept secret and sacred. Oh, Lucy, to-day seems to be another day from yesterday; the men and women whom I so abused a few minutes ago seem to me not nearly so bad! They may be decayed, but they mean well."

She laughed. That laugh was delightful to him, for he now saw that what had been his fatal *bête noire* and phantom—"Such a sacrifice for duty!" and his sister's ugly speech, "Old enough to be her father!" had no place here.

Mr. Dacres, now at the highest point marked on the scale, "exuberant good humour," had turned to seize on his daughter. "Here's my cricket, Mrs. Beaufort, the last élève Miss Pringle has turned out. Tell Mrs. Beaufort about Miss Pringle, Lulu, love—her terms, and teaching, and all that. I never can keep this sort of thing in my head. My dear child, what have you done with West?"

Mr. West went home, smiling to himself, and tripping as lightly over the hard trottoir as any of Miss Pringle's young ladies. No wonder. He had swallowed the elixir of life, which is love! Neighbours, knowing his hours, thought he was posting home to dinner. Miss Margaret West thought so too, and received him smiling at his eagerness. She was one of those good souls who delight in seeing others ready to "do justice" to what their hands have prepared, and whom, of course, the selfish hungry take very easy. Already she had repented for her plain speaking the night before. She knew his sensitiveness, and that he would feel it doubly; and, like many other good souls, thought how she would make it up to him in the best way known to her, by a special treat which she knew he liked—a fine browned French fowl. It was already nearly the proper time. He came bounding up the stairs.

She saw something in his face, which no prospect of fowls could have inspired. Her look of bright and kindly reception changed to one of uneasiness. "Where have you been?" she asked, without much meaning.

"Ah, Margaret," he said, exultingly, "you were wrong. I have come from her, and have told her everything, and—and I was right!"

She rose up angrily, and, with the colour rushing to her cheek, "flounced" impatiently over to the window. She understood it all.

"Then I tell you this," she said at last, turning to him, "you have done a foolish and a ridiculous thing. With all your sense! When it comes to a point of inclination or whim, the wise and the foolish seem to be just the same. I tell you, you will live to repent it."

"Not I," he answered; "never. Oh, Margaret, think me a fool—a child—what you will, but this remains: I am happier than I have been for ten years. The sun seems to shine—the world to be alive—and life to be something. If this be folly, how can you blame me? for it is so much pleasanter than wisdom."

How could she blame him. She could only mutter impatiently, but with half her displeasure gone, "Such follies—at your age!"

Meanwhile the new family had been established at "Poolyack's," in the enjoyment of every luxury. The simple tradesmen of the place—varying a little the principle of their countrymen, the Bourbons—had learnt nothing and forgotten everything, and felicitated each other on the blessing of having such patrons. They had the "air so distinguished," so "*gentil*," the genuine air, in short, which, alas! so many of their predecessors had to so fatal an extent. The furniture-maker was allowed, at his own urgent request, to send up to Paris for mirrors of a more elegant pattern to suit Mr. G. Beaufort's exacting taste. The best horses, and, singular omen! the all but new phaeton, built to a Sir Jones's order, a *difficile* gentleman, too, and mysteriously abandoned when that displayer of the Red Hand disappeared and was never heard of again. This handsome turn-out was accepted grudgingly by the Beauforts, until something better could be found. The elegance and even magnificence of their apartments was, justly, the theme of all. Men in the shabby old shooting-coats stopped each other in the street to tell of what they had just heard at Fay's shop—a humble artist, who dealt in the silver-gilt brooches, with a few watches and chains in his window—that he had received orders to have down from Paris a Breguet watch, its chains and decorations, of the very "first force." The small notabilities of the place were deposed; every one began to struggle to reach these distinguished strangers, and were never tired of repeating that "there was no mistake about them;" the uncomplimentary hint being, that "mistake" was incident to the common lot of Dieppe immigrants. Mr. Blacker, the bringer of these valuable recruits, was exalted proportionably. The people who had been inclined to sneer at his rapturous panegyrics, and laugh at his black swans, were now silenced.

The bearing of the gentlemen of this Guernsey Beaufort family, who seemed to despise the whole place, excited no resentment. It was merely agreed that Mrs. Beaufort was not up to the standard of the rest; having a kind of gentle, amiable manner, that was scarcely high-bred. It was noticed, also, that she could not talk of the "high" persons met in a former state; and, being rather overlooked by her husband and brother-in-law, of whom she seemed to stand in timorous awe, she was justly set down "as being of inferior

extraction to him;" he had married some person a little lower in degree, for money, most likely. Yet she had a wonderful sweetness of manner.

CHAPTER X. AT THE POST.

WRITING many letters, and looking out now and again on the place where the market was going on, Mr. West spent the morning busily and cheerfully. The parti-colours, the flitting to and fro of the figures, the fruit, the fish, the wares, the booths, and baskets, reminded him of the market-scene in an opera which he had long ago seen in Paris. He smiled as he caught himself admitting such associations with pleasure. Not so long ago he would have called it "a hungry place—the wretched theatrical market-women." He then went out to post his papers. Bright day, "gay little place;" so it seemed to him now. On the road, he passed the little toy library, more a stall than a shop, where the English got books printed in Paris by the admirable M. Baudry, then the chief pirate of the Continent. Le Duc's, or "Le Duke," as he was translated, was a great resort. English were always coming in and going out; English were always poking and rummaging in the dark corners, choosing a book. Poor Le Duke used to complain, piteously, of having often to redeem his volumes in person from the local "Hill of Piety," which he visited in the regular way of business. Le Duke had the longest face of all that morning, and was telling Captain Filby, dismally, "Nine months' subscription, sir, and not a farthing paid. The three young ladies coming every day, and there are two dozen of my books which I shall never, never, see again!"

"Serve you right, Le Duke," was the captain's consolation. "Don't you know our English yet? Not you. You'll be trusting 'em again and again. Hallo, West, you coming for a story-book! By Jove, we'll all be paying our debts in Dieppe next!"

Another time, Mr. West would have coldly put down this gentleman, whom he always kept at a distance. He knew him thoroughly. Perhaps Mr. Filby knew the bad impression he had produced tolerably well. Most men and women have an instinct in such things. Mr. West answered him good-humouredly that morning: "I want something for my sister," he said, "and must subscribe for her. Her life is dull enough."

"Nothing like family affection. I like to see it. Have you met Blacker's new swells—flock of black swans, of course? Nothing like 'em ever came into the place. Prizes! Mark my words, sir, they'll turn up blanks. Take care of 'em, Le Duke. If anything particularly gentlemanlike comes into your shop, be on your guard, my friend; and as for any thing uncommonly lady-like——"

Mr. West could venture on a jest that morning.

"Why, this is most unselfish of you. I

hope he has had no reason to regret trusting Captain Filby."

"Is *that* a joke?" the other answered, sourly. "I say that Mr. Blacker has got these decent people, the Dalrymples, to take up those De Courcys, or whatever their name is. They're giving them a little drum. No use asking if you're going. Oh, no! We might as well hope to see one of the nuns out of the convent here."

"I don't know," said Mr. West, cheerfully. "I dare say we shall be there."

Mr. Filby looked after him askance, and told his friends that West was getting quite like a boy at school; and remember he told 'em that fellow would give the old girl the slip, one day, and end by marrying some low *pity* feel out of a back room.

Mr. West went on gaily to the post. He was thinking to himself, "No one shall ever be able to say I am a fool, or repeat that cant about a school-girl, and—old enough to be her father. It shall all come from *her*. She shall have her own time, and shall work it out for herself. If she were to think she was *bound* in any way, it would be a constraint." He knew human nature so well, did Mr. West; and when he was at the bar, his friends said no man could lead a witness so well, or follow the human mind in its ebbs and driftings over the flats and shallows of motives and self-interest. He was a solitary walker, and found a great pleasure in lonely wanderings up the cliffs to the old fort, where the few soldiers kept a mouldy guard. There he had his own world figures, men and women, curious events, and dreams, still more entertaining to him than real men and women and their doings. He, too, used to go down to the ships; but at the season when the world was not there. He frequented the inner port, where the small English brig ran in, and unloaded, and the Rotterdam barque with the wings folded to its sides; where the souped custom-house officers, in dingy livery, moved about sadly among casks and chests. But on this day he was looking cheerfully and with interest at the regular inhabitants and colonists. He was thinking what dramatic life there must be among them, what character, what shifts, what knavery, had a man but time and inclination to study them.

Here was the post—a dull, money-lending, pawnbroking little hovel, yet the most interesting spot in the whole place. Tragedy, comedy, farce, went on there. The little Frenchman who sat at the window, what a study of faces he could have made! The matter-of-fact Englishman, putting forward his card, "See here, Wilson, please—anything pour moi, I say?" and who turns away with an almost audible "d—n" of disappointment. The timorous girl, with face full of a wistful pain, and a voice that she tries to keep steady, and who has been sent by mamma and the girls at home for the expected letter which they know will not come. Wonderful man at the window, whose life goes by dipping

into pigeon-holes, and turning over letters as if they were packs of cards! His patience is marvellous. And what faces outside! The English reading actually in the road, the mouths altering slowly, as they read, from a long slit to a round O of consternation and despair. The more respectable lost all this excitement.

As he came away, the dingy and gloomy lane became illuminated with a flash of light, and a gay step came tripping along. It was Lucy. She was postman, manager, market-woman, everything. Within the short time she had left school, she had taken a host of duties on her. When she saw West, she ran to him. "Getting letters?" she said. "Papa wants his, though he can expect nothing as yet. And," she added, smiling, "there can be no bad news. Oh, we are all in such spirits at home, and so happy. I left him singing, and reading his newspapers, and he says he feels like a boy."

"This is good news," said he, smiling. "But what is the reason of all this?"

"Well, you should know," said Lucy, naively. "Our poor Harco says you are 'his back,' and that he does not know where he would be without you. And, do you know, he says after you have been with him he feels so hopeful. Will you promise me this?" she added, stopping and looking up wistfully into his face—"to be with him as much as you can? Some way, we do not know how to keep him up."

"My dear Miss Lucy, since I saw you I have been thinking of all sorts of things. In a few days, I will tell you what I have worked out. But I am sure I shall light on something for him—something that will clear away all difficulties, if you will only get him to second me a little."

"How good you are!" said she, enthusiastically. "I could take your hand here and kiss it."

"Hush!" he said, colouring, and looking round. "There is nothing in that. If I could only find out some way——"

"But there *is* something," she said, with an affectionate impatience that was her characteristic. "And what love! What can I do in return? Ah! let us go on quickly; there is that dreadful man."

Mr. Filby was limping down to get his newspapers at the post, and cursing the stones at every step. Gout used to seize on him at times, and put him in his worst humour. He saw the pair, and that evening, as he sat on a bench at the port, he told some of his admirers that West was sniggering and sneaking after that little chit of a school-girl, who might be his great-granddaughter, and as knowing a little shaver as any of the crew here. "He has to pay that Irishman, her father, many a nap. for letting her humbug him."

There were no letters for Mr. Dacres. "I am not sorry," said Lucy, confidentially, "for it is generally only one in ten which we call a good letter."

"We shall try and make them all good letters in future," he said.

"Ah!" she said, stopping. "I was thinking of this ever so long before going to sleep last night—a poor childish creature like me, with what you will call no mind, and you so wise, and clever, and experienced, and have seen so much life."

A look of uneasiness came into his face, and a sort of twitch about his mouth. "Well," he said, quite calmly, and even indifferently, "you remember what we agreed on; in fact, that there was to be no agreement? That is what I wished for. Only, instead of lying awake and losing that dear and precious sleep, why not think everything over comfortably and leisurely during the next few months or years, if you please. I am, as you say, wiser and older——"

"You never will understand me," she said, vehemently, and half turning back from him. "You turn everything I say. Do you want superiority over a poor young girl just fresh from a school, by forcing her to do homage to your pride by telling you that she loves and worships your gifts? I *can't* tell you any such thing. I won't. I said enough last night, when I told you I liked you, and could like you more, and would try to like you more again. If I am not clever, I can be truthful, and not all your power and cleverness of the world can get more from me than that."

With glowing face she turned and tripped hastily away. He smiled, and did not call her back. "This will do very well," he was thinking to himself, and went on to take a cheerful and brisk walk up on his favourite beat of the ramparts, where the lonely soldiers heard "the Englishman" singing to himself as he passed them.

When Lucy came home, she found her father lying on the comfortable velvet sofa, reading the newspaper.

"Well, my little Lulu," he cried, "where's papa's budget?" He was a little put out and disappointed. "And what on earth kept you?" he said, getting up. "I told that blackguard at the hotel to send me on everything in a cover. I suppose they'll keep me waiting, waiting, from day to day, sending, and sending, and coming back with our fingers in our mouths. Phew!" And he looked ruefully out of the window, with his hands deep in his pockets. "On my soul, my last lodgings, though they looked out on a yard with rails over it, had more life than this."

Lulu came up to him to coax him into good humour, as if she were Annot Lyle with her harp. "I thought you liked a hotel, Harco, pet?"

"Hotel!" and he burst into a loud laugh. "Oh, ay, to be sure. Hôtel de Diable. Little innocent. You should sit up aloft, my sweet little cherub! Well, well—hope deferred, and all that. I don't know how things will turn out. Here's precious time, youth, strength, manhood, passing away. The golden hours

when I might be making name and fame, all going from me like a puff."

"Now, now," said she, getting a pained expression. "You promised me, you know, dear. It will be only for a short time, and then——"

"Easy for you to say, 'and then.' What's the difference to you? There are my jolly fellows going Circuit—they're at Preston by this—and that prig, Colter, with as much brains as would go into my last pill-box, picking up every prisoner and every case that I should have. He'll fill the jails quick enough. God help the poor devils *he* defends! Where is that—that West, your affianced lover?"

Lucy gave a start, and looked round in alarm. As she did so, she saw the "little glass," "pity vane," as it was known to her English. It explained the sudden depression. "Oh, papa, you must not say that. You know it is to be secret, and to be kept secret, for all our sakes."

"And *who* says it's to be secret? Do I want arrangements of this sort to be huggermugged over, as if there was anything wrong or disgraceful?"

"Ah, papa, papa," she said, impetuously, and all but wringing her hands, "I see, we cannot depend on you. You won't understand. You will ruin all. This is not to be known or talked of. It is his wish, too, his earnest wish, that the cruel people about here should not be watching and talking. And I must have time to learn to love him and esteem him as he deserves to be loved and esteemed. Even this morning he was laying out plans for you—a grand future—by which you were to get back and win the high position your great talents and genius deserve. But, oh, I do fear this will spoil all."

"Was he now? Well, he's a good fellow. And I was wrong. I spoke indiscreetly. Even in presence of my own child, I see I must learn to speak by the card, and as if the whole town were listening." He said this very bitterly, the parental heart was deeply wounded by its child's treatment. "But he is a good man, a good fellow; and, Lulu, the wish of my heart is, before you and poor mamma close my eyes, to see you united to the honourable, high-minded, conscientious man who will stand by you, and shield my little girl from harm. I'll just get my hat," added Mr. Dacres, his manner suddenly changing into the gayest alacrity, "and take a turn with him, and talk things over. I like particulars in everything. 'Often' won't do with me. I tell a blackguard of a witness, 'Look at this jury, and give me the day of the week and particulars, you beggar you.' Give me a kiss, pet, and run and ask mamma for a five-franc piece for little papa. I think I'll have a quiet little feed at the caffé there, with one of those gentlemanly Beauforts. I declare I'll be running to seed and grow mouldy, if I don't see a bit of life."

Having obtained what he desired, Mr.

Dacres put on his hat carefully before the glass, brushed the collar of his coat, and went out.

RUSSIAN CORN.

FAR away among the wildest of the wild steppes of Russia, and in the heart of the corn countries, is a desolate village. It is one of very many, and a fair type of all villages in Southern Russia. It is built in a straggling line, the main and only street being about twice as wide as Piccadilly at its widest part. It may extend perhaps a long English mile, perhaps two, from one end to the other. The reason of its length is that every hut has a yard belonging to it about as large as Grosvenor-square, sometimes twice or three times as large. The yard serves no purpose in particular. It is a mere waste of good ground. It becomes a huge dust-heap in summer, and a bog or quagmire during the rest of the year.

The huts, generally situated all alone at the extreme of a corner facing the road, have a peculiarly miserable appearance. They are built of mud and sagots coarsely whitened, and have thatched roofs, usually with large holes in them. Every hut is divided by a clay stove into two dim holes, and is floored with dried manure. This "Kirpitch" is also the only fuel used. Few of these huts have any windows. Some of them have no doors. Everything betokens decay, misery, listlessness, indifference to any of the comforts or decencies of human life. The village looks precisely what it is: a place inhabited almost entirely by drunken men and women, utterly ignorant, utterly brutalised and demoralised by despotic government. Their sole pleasure in this world is drink. There is not a garden, not a fruit-tree, not a shrub, in sight; not a flower, not a singing-bird, not a nag horse, or a pet calf, about. No pleasant apple-faced old woman spinning in a doorway, no girl singing as she carries her milk and eggs to market. Nothing which makes the charm and beauty of an English or a German village. All is black, dreary, forbidding. Even Nature herself is sad in a Russian village. A few gaunt thin pigs walk about, hide-bound, grubbing discontentedly for offal. Bands of large shaggy fierce dogs rush out from every yard on the passer-by, and must be stoned back to their kennels before they will allow him to go upon his way.

There are only two exceptions to this universal wretchedness and squalor. Upon the highest elevation near the village stands a beautiful church, and there is not a man nor a woman in the neighbourhood but who has subscribed to it. The Boyard (or squire) himself, who gives nothing for any other object, gives munificently to that. So the church is full of the thank-offerings and sacrifices of the community. In itself a graceful and imposing structure, every nook and corner within is resplendent with gold, and silver, and jewels.

Images of favourite saints are set up with golden halos round their heads, and encased in frames of gold. The Apostles and primitive fathers of the church are all there, in vestments thickly plated with the precious metals, and with crowns and crosiers lavishly encrusted with gems. These sacred images and pictures are mostly made at the holy city of Kiev, a place to which pilgrimages are made by the Russians of orthodox faith, as they were made by the Catholics of the middle ages to Jerusalem, and as they are now made by the Mahomedans to Mecca. On the first dedication of the church a deputation of the elders of the village is sent to Kiev to purchase an image of the patron saint selected. Incredible prices are readily paid for such an image. Eighty or a hundred pounds may be raised in the poorest hamlet to buy one, although probably not a fourth of the sum could be obtained to save the whole community from annihilation. Perhaps Russia is the only Christian country in the world where men are demonstratively religious, and fond of ostentatious church-going. The Spaniards, the Portuguese, the Italians, have splendid churches, and a magnificent priesthood; but their daily church-goers are almost all women. Whereas in Russia, for one woman in a church may be seen fifty men. The outward show and demonstration of religious feeling enters into every action of the life of a Russian. He crosses himself more often than the Catholic, and at times and in circumstances which would appear to the Catholic unseemly and even sacrilegious. Gorgeous also as are the Russian churches, they stand nearly always open on week days as well as Sundays and saints' days. No man thinks of a particular dress, nor a fixed time for going to church. But poor, half-clad, over-wrought fellows will go miles out of their way to cast themselves in their rags and dirt on the pavement before the magnificent altar, and press their lips and foreheads to the stone in the extremity of their pious humiliation. They are so fond of their church, that nearly half the year is consumed in religious feasts and fasts, during which all labour and business is entirely stopped, both in town and country. Any Russian who might venture to infringe the usages consecrated by tradition on these holy days, would hardly be suffered to escape with his life in places remote from the few great cities. It is curious to record, that although the vestments of the orthodox Greek priests are surprisingly grand and costly, although their spiritual authority is almost unlimited, and they are often the only members of the community among which they live who can read or write, the priests themselves are not respected, and are ill paid. They are extraordinarily superstitious and ignorant. They associate only with the peasantry, and as a class are said by the landlords to be troublesome, meddlesome, and litigious. They are suffered to marry, and their calling had gradually become hereditary till a few weeks ago. The bishops and superior clergy of the Greek

church are chosen entirely from among the monks.

The only remaining exception to the distressing appearance of a Russian village is the trim cottage of the land agent. It looks like a rich English citizen's villa dropped down by enchantment in the midst of a barren wilderness. It is substantially and even elegantly built. It has hot-houses, stabling, coach-houses, and a great deal of smart new paint about it. The traveller whose carriage may have broken down in the frost-bound rut a yard deep before the door, will probably see, if he look upward, a queer and unexpected sight. This will be a lady and gentleman—or perhaps, though seldom, the former only—industriously posing themselves in a romantic and picturesque attitude at the window to attract his attention. If familiar with those highly ornamental engravings in the book of Fashions, he will perceive to his amazement that the lady, and not unfrequently the gentleman, are dressed in the last new toilet described and illustrated in *Le Follet* or the *Livre Rose*: dressed, indeed, perhaps hastily, and for the surprising occasion of the coming of a civilised man into this desert, but nevertheless beyond question so arrayed. The lady with the last new fan, the gentleman with the last new cane, both held perseveringly in the last new attitude, with a pertinacity quite wonderful. If the stranger should be further detained by his carriage-wheels having caught fire, and a general dislocation of springs, as will probably be the case, he may have the opportunity of improving his acquaintance with this strange couple; and he will find, to his ever increasing bewilderment, that their manners are even more surprising than their appearance. They will come down to him, and frankly accost him, if an Englishman, with some such words as: "Makeshakehands! whataclok?" all strung together. But if they find that he can speak French, they become instantly voluble, and both talk together, till there is a dispute between them, in which both appeal to the traveller for his decision. Then they suddenly recollect their fashionable manners again, and affect to treat the dispute lightly. These fashionable manners are the bane and ridicule of Russia. In fact, they are acquired, chiefly if not entirely, from French novels and fashion books, the sole mental food of the upper classes of Russian country people. Thus their conversation will be carried on for hours in the style of the latest popular French author. Sometimes they will use his very language, without a precise idea of its meaning; and if he have coined any new word particularly objectionable, it is sure to turn up in their discourse. The subject of this talk is not less curious than its style. The first effort of the speakers is an ardent endeavour to disconnect themselves from everything and everybody around them. They would like it to be believed that they have just arrived from Paris, and are about to return to Paris immediately. The slightest encouragement would

induce the gentleman there and then to accept the vacant seat in the traveller's carriage, and, quitting wife, children, friends, go on with him, anywhere, everywhere, only out of Russia. Paris is the paradise of his dreams; but any other place would do for a beginning. Of the villagers, both lady and gentleman speak with crushing contempt, and illustrate their opinions by relating some amusing and some shocking anecdotes.

What strikes the traveller unfavourably is, that although it is evident that the land agent and his wife are hospitably disposed, they do not ask him to dinner. The fact is, as he will soon discover, that they have no dinner. Throughout the whole village, not a scrap of anything edible is to be found after eleven or twelve o'clock in the morning, when the "Borsch" was served. This is the national dish. It is a soup or stew, made of salted and fermented cabbages. On feast-days there is a piece of tough stringy beef in it; on fast-days there is no beef; its place being then supplied with dried mushrooms. How stringy and how tough the beef is, may be guessed from the fact that an ox is always made to work until a venerable old age in the corn-fields before he is introduced to the cook. The vegetables used for "Borsch" are large white cabbages as big as a giant's head, also very hard and tough. These are the only vegetables commonly eaten in Southern Russia. They are salted and put into dark cellars for winter use, and form the staple food of gentle and simple all through the year. Indeed, strange as it may seem, "Borsch" is not bad when you get used to it. At any rate, you must get used to it; for it is the only thing to be got in any of the villages, and that for only one hour in the day, about noon. Noeggs, bacon, milk, potatoes, or anything whatsoever which might be described by courtesy as eatable, is to be begged, bought, or borrowed. Neither is there anything to drink but the coarse fiery corn-spirit called vodka. That may always be had, anywhere and everywhere. The presumption is, that a traveller carries all he wants with him; and therefore a Russian family going from one village to another, if they have to travel more than a day's journey, form quite a caravan. Even single travellers must be so well equipped as to add considerably to their baggage; and great men send their cooks on to the halting-places, in time to prepare their necessary meals. All that can be obtained at the post-houses and villages, is a semovar or tea-kettle and a little hot water. Nothing more; no bed, no washing-basin, no towel, nothing but a room with a table, a chair, and a sofa, all alive with vermin, foul with dirt and neglect, and reeking with the stale smoke of generations of travellers carefully fastened in by double windows. The best thing, therefore, that a discreet traveller can do, is, to carry a well-stocked hamper of wholesome food and drink, from the best French or German hotel in the last large city he leaves behind him, and to ask any acquaintance he may meet on the

road to dine with him. Though the Russians are certainly the least sensual people in the world, knowing nothing about cookery and caring less, they will probably be very glad to do so, that they may have an opportunity to enjoy a little of that talk which they love better than all the savoury dishes ever invented.

It is not easy for an inexperienced person to guess what the village street is, though any one familiar with Russian travel perceives at a glance that it is the "court" or mansion of the Russian nobleman to whom, a few years ago, before the emancipation of the serfs, the village and every one in it belonged; houses, lands, bodies, and bones. Now, the villagers belong to themselves, but the whole country, sometimes for scores of miles, is the property of the Boyard, who is revelling in Paris, or at Rome, or who is running horses for the Derby, and startling the wealthiest nobles of the West by his lavish expenditure.

There, in the village street, stands this gallant prodigal's home. There he was born; and there, after a few years of profusion and folly, he will return, broken in health, ruined in fortune, to pass the remainder of a misspent life, and watch the produce of his fields pass yearly into the hands of the usurers who supplied him with the means of pursuing his brief and shameful career of extravagance, leaving all the noblest duties of life unfulfilled. Gloomy, moody, besotted, the spendthrift of London and Paris will sink, first into a mere boor, and then into an early grave. This is simply told, but it is the summary of a very common history; and when the traveller in future hears of the balls, the banquets, the running horses, and the fine jewels, of a Russian prince, he may remember this scene with feelings not so peculiarly impressed by awe and admiration for Russian princes as they once were.

The Boyard's house and dependencies cover several acres of ground. The building is as large as a barrack. It is nearly always new, or a ruin; in either case it is certain to be unfinished. The minds of the Boyard and his architect appear to have wavered between a feudal castle, a Greek temple, a Lutheran church, and a hospital. The design, vast, and the produce of a confused intelligence, has hopelessly broken down in the execution. The coarseness of the work has been whitewashed and plastered over; but the plaster has peeled off in the sun, and has been washed off by the rain. Part of the roof has fallen in; the Norman tower has sunk down, top-heavy and one-sided. It was copied, perhaps, from a print of Warwick Castle in some book of beauty; but now stands a ruin, inexpressibly melancholy, and, worst of all, grotesque.

The pleasure-grounds around the "court" have been planned on the same extensive scale as this mockery of a palace. Careful examination will show the basements of stately terraces, intended to look over such gardens as those in which the old Italians meditated, and Leo the Tenth or Lorenzo the Magnificent dreamed of empire. They are crumbling to the

dust. The long line of hothouses, meant to be filled with grapes, and pines, and exotics, are hardly recognisable. A few oxen are tethered in the apartment meant to be a billiard-room. Here and there are some bare poles standing at regular intervals. They were once young trees, planted to make a lordly avenue leading to a portico, long ago blown down. Inside the house, everything is upon the same extensive principle. No moderately near-sighted person could distinguish objects for more than half the length of any of the principal rooms. It would cost the yearly rent of two hundred acres of Russian land, at the current value of four shillings an acre, to heat any one of the rooms properly; so that they are all as damp and cold as an ice-house. Not a door nor a window will close. The flooring has never been put down, and some of the planks and squares of fine wood are rotting in a lumber-room, whence now and then a mujik carries off a few for fuel, or the land agent contrives to find a use for them. Nothing about the house is complete. There is a wide stone staircase leading from a banquet-hall to a ball-room. It has no hand-rail. Some of the walls of the state apartments are gilded and richly decorated, but in the chief drawing-room, which is the finest of all, the large French windows have never been put in, and the spaces where they ought to be are loosely boarded, so that the rain comes through. There are a few servants about. They are like the other villagers. The men among them can with difficulty be distinguished from the women. Both are rolled up in untanned sheepskins; both wear the same thick knee-boots, without which it would be impossible to wade through the mud of the streets; both leave only the face visible; both smell equally strong of vodka and bad tobacco; both look equally red, raw, pinched, and uncomfortable. There is little furniture in the house, perhaps none. If there be any, it will probably be found to consist of some gilded chairs and sofas, never used, but stowed away and moth-eaten; with a three-legged stool and a common deal table in the same room with them, for use. The stables are empty; the wine-cellars are empty. When the prince comes down on a restless flying visit once in three or four years, he brings his own bed and provisions, and puts up at the house of his agent, where he is sure of warm dry shelter. While he stays, there is nothing for him to do. No shooting, no fishing, no riding, no neighbours, no quarter sessions. So he smokes all day as he wanders with his agent about the sheep-folds and barns; takes as much money as he can possibly get; and then manages to convey himself clear off in the night, when the villagers are in bed, for fear he should be asked for any of it back again. The priests will be sure to get some of it, but nobody else has a chance; and the great man's visit, which seldom lasts more than thirty hours, leaves no trace whatever behind it. Many of the villagers, perhaps, never saw him before, and

will never see him again. Some of the old folk, maybe, remember when he was whisked away suddenly one day as a child to be educated at St. Petersburg; but this may have been before many of the present generation were born. The prince has lived so long abroad since then, that he cannot, and even will not if he can, speak his own language. He still looks upon the peasantry on his estate as mere goods and chattels, knowing nothing of their wants, wishes, lives, or deaths.

They are tolerably shrewd, too, on their side of the question. To rent some of the best corn-land in the world at four shillings an acre for virgin soil is no bad speculation at present prices, and a very few years would, and probably will, see Russian tenant-farmers grow rich. They must certainly become so, but for their incurable habits of waste and drunkenness. However, as the tenant-farmer is quite a novelty in Russia, it is to be hoped that he will soon begin to try and educate himself beyond that pitiful period in civilisation when drunkenness is not shamed away by the general condemnation and good sense of a people.

The Russian peasant of the south is, moreover, a queer fellow in several other respects besides his shrewdness in dealing with his landlord. He firmly believed that when he was emancipated from serfdom he might live all his life in idleness, his late master being bound by the State to provide for all his wants. It was a long time before he could get over his surprise at finding that he had to work for a living. So he will not work. Thus, most of the agricultural labour in the corn districts has been performed by hired gangs brought from a distance by contractors. Contracting to supply labourers has become so profitable a business, that it has given rise to all sorts of abuses and frauds. The Boyards have been entirely at the mercy of contractors, and have been either obliged to submit to any conditions imposed upon them, or leave their lands altogether untilld. Moreover, as the contractors have naturally insisted on being paid in advance, and in metallic money, owing to the rapid fluctuations in the currency, and as coin is a scarce commodity among the landowners, thousands of acres of good soil have been thrown out of cultivation, and those which have been sown have not paid the expenses of farming. Formerly, every landowner could get his land tilled by his serfs, without any money payment at all. Now, all who have not been able to command capital have been ruined. Most of the small estates, including all under ten thousand acres, have been either sold or abandoned, and mortgagees who have foreclosed on many of the large ones, supposed to be only pledged for a third of their value, have been unable to realise their advances. The best land in the best and most fertile districts, therefore, may be purchased for from thirty shillings to three pounds an acre, farm-buildings and live stock included. Another observable effect of the emancipation has been the large increase of marriages. Formerly no serf could marry with-

out the permission of his lord, and many of the worst of the old feudal customs long forgotten in Western Europe existed in full force among the Boyards. Immediately, however, all restrictions on marriage were removed, every marriageable man, woman, or child rushed into matrimony. A chance meeting in the street, a short acquaintance, or no acquaintance at all—the faintest shadow of a pretext was sufficient. No sooner had the inhabitants of any village obtained their liberty than they made haste to barter it away with each other, and as many of the newly married people as possible flocked into the towns, where life is comparatively easy and the most unskilled work highly paid, so that the villages have become more thinly peopled than before.

Such is the actual existing state of the corn countries of Southern Russia, one of the most fertile food-producing districts of modern times. Such, also, it has been as far back as any records of Russian history extend. The whole civilisation of the empire is concentrated in less than half a dozen large cities. All the rest, steppe, and hamlet, and market-town, are as wild and wretched as when Rurik first founded Ladoga on the banks of the Volkhof, or his victorious cymbals struck dismay into the fierce hearts of the Varangians and the hordes of the Tschuder.

Russia has been a poor civiliser hitherto; but a great change is at hand, and it comes from the only quarter whence salutary reforms in Russia are possible. It is to a German that this great empire is about to owe her final liberation from barbarism. Baron Ungern Sternberg has at last solved the great difficulty created by the want of hands in a country of such vast extent, and maintaining so large an army with so scanty a population. Although harassed by the ungenerous envy and detraction which attend like a shadow upon merit, the baron has at last organised a comprehensive system of military labour, which has created railroads for Russia. At first he began with mere convicts and men under punishment; but his sagacity and management were so admirable, he soon acquired so perfect a command over his workmen by a judicious system of rewards and punishments, that his opponents were forced to admit the success of his experiment. The baron's workmen began to be numbered by thousands; and as it was found that men could not do the work of navvies without being well fed and clothed, it was looked upon as a pleasant change from fetid barracks, bad rations, and hard drill, to good quarters and plenty. The system has not been fairly at work more than three years; but it has succeeded for a time, at least, in turning even the bone of a large standing army into a blessing.

The hamlets of the corn districts are already waking up into new life at the sound of the railway whistle, and the frauds which have hitherto kept the price of Russian wheat up to quotations altogether arbitrary and fictitious will soon be a thing of the past. The merchants of Odessa and Taganrog will sink into

mere brokers and shipping agents when the large producers of grain in Podolia and Volhynia can come directly in contact with the buyers of Mark-lane; and the network of railways, now extending so rapidly, will soon yield the Russian farmer a better profit than he has been ever yet able to realise upon wheat grown at less than half of the present prices.

It is also quite clear, and the British farmer should lay this fact to heart, that the supplies of wheat to be expected in a few years from provinces so extensive and fruitful as those which lie round the Black Sea and the Sea of Azoff will be almost illimitable, when communication is everywhere open from field to ship, and the waste, cost, and uncertainty of transport by oxen is but a tradition to be told to wondering hearers on a winter's night.

WORRY.

THE second of the two dog-stories we are about to narrate was so graphically and simply told to us a short time ago by the owner of the dog, a Bavarian gentleman resident in England, that, with his kind permission, we give it to the public.

We had been speaking of the wonderful manner in which instinct in all animals appears to develop from constant and intimate association with man, and had mentioned a case of a dog belonging to a friend of the late gallant General Sir George Napier, who had been taught by his master to refuse all food presented to him with the left hand. On one occasion, when Sir George Napier (who had lost his right arm at the storming of Ciudad Rodrigo) dined at his friend's house, the guests were amusing themselves by tempting this well-bred dog to lower his high standard of etiquette. All in vain. Not one of seven gentlemen present could bribe him to accept any dainty, however savoury, from the left hand, though he eagerly ate food presented with the right hand. On Sir George Napier's offering him food with *his* left and *only* hand, however, the dog glanced at the general's empty sleeve, and, without further hesitation, accepted the gift. The experiment was tried again and again, but the animal's discrimination was never at fault.

Now comes the Bavarian gentleman's anecdote.

On Wednesday, the 27th of June, 1866, Mr. Otto Striedinger, a gentleman connected with the Royal Victoria Hospital at Netley, went with two friends to a croquet party at Westend, about five miles from Netley. He was accompanied as usual by his favourite dog Worry—a magnificent black retriever. The weather being extremely hot, the croquet did not begin before four o'clock, and was followed by supper; so that it was ten o'clock before the party broke up. The three gentlemen then walked back to Netley in the dusk. The footpath by which they returned led through a private park, and across a common overgrown with heather. When

about a mile from Netley, the walkers passed a reservoir, which supplies the hospital with water. The night being hot and close, Mr. Striedinger wished to give his dog a swim. He whistled again and again, but no Worry came; so he made up his mind that the dog had been hunting for his own private amusement, and had lost the track, as there was very little scent on the ground. Worry's master did not trouble himself about his whereabouts, as he had been for years a very independent dog, quite up to taking care of himself, and would doubtless find his way home later. Mr. Striedinger's arrival at the hospital, and was preparing to go to bed, when he remembered that he had to answer two letters, which he had received by that afternoon's post, just as he was starting with his friends for Westend. These letters were of great importance, and when Mr. Striedinger had looked for them without success he felt extremely uncomfortable. He instituted a search all over his rooms, turned his writing-case topsy-turvy, looked through his desk; but all in vain. He then took a light, and had a hunt in every nook and corner of his office; but came back empty-handed. Thoroughly tired and discomposed, he went to bed. Unable to sleep, he got up in the middle of the night to make another and an equally fruitless search. At last the morning sun began to light up the rooms, which was a signal for fresh investigation, with the same result. Then, and not before, the idea struck him that the letters having been delivered just as he was starting for the croquet party, he must have read them on the way thither, and must have then put them in his coat-pocket; but when he thrust his hand into the pocket, and drew it back empty, he felt convinced that his letters were lost beyond all chance of recovery. Hoping against hope, however, he resolved to make one more effort.

He rushed off, unhaven and unkempt, to retrace his steps of the previous day, looking right and left, turning over every scrap of paper he saw lying on the road, stopping wherever he recollected that he and his companions had stopped the day before, mistaking every object that was conspicuously light in the distance for the papers, and growing more despairing every minute. After walking on for about three miles, he espied a black object lying close to the foot-path. It was Worry's black head. Reproaching himself for having in his great uneasiness forgotten his favourite, he whistled to Worry, who, however, instead of showing his usual alacrity, remained lying motionless on the ground. His owner supposed him to be caught in one of the snares with which he knew the common to be thickly studded; but, on his approaching Worry, up jumped the dog, leaving exposed to Mr. Striedinger's delighted view, the missing letters, together with a number of other loose papers. There had been a very heavy dew that night, and Worry's curly coat was as wet as if he had had an hour's swim in the neighbouring reservoir; but the papers were

as dry, hot, and crisp, as a breakfast roll out of a baker's oven. There were marks of teeth on one or two of them, showing, either that before having had recourse to his subsequent and successful expedient for preserving his master's property Worry had endeavoured to collect and carry the scattered manuscripts, or, which is more probable, that he had—finding them too numerous to allow of his acting on his retrieving instincts—brought all the outlying letters within reach of the shelter of his outstretched body. It was now eight o'clock. This devoted dog had been on guard over these papers for sixteen hours, ever since the friends went to Westend at about four o'clock on Wednesday afternoon. It must have been then, and not on the return to Netley, that Mr. Striedinger dropped his letters. For they fell out of a breast-pocket of the coat, which he hung over his arm when walking in the sultry heat of the afternoon, but which he wore on his way home at night, when it would be impossible for the contents of the pocket so to escape. The gentlemen in returning must have made some slight deviation from the path by which they had gone, and in this manner must have missed the sentinel, Worry.

THE MURDERED ORDERLY.

THERE was an Hungarian in my staff, a man closely bordering on middle age, and of extraordinary intelligence and information. He spoke five languages: his native tongue, English, French, German, and Spanish; and possessed an extensive knowledge of the history of many lands. My first encounter with him in Australia was rather curious, and shows what singular coincidences will occur in life.

I had camped one evening, after many miles of travel, near a welcome water-hole, and was sitting on a log wearily waiting for the "billy" to boil, when a man rode up driving three horses before him. He saluted me in a slightly foreign accent, and was proceeding further on, when I told him that as tea was nearly ready he had better halt there. This is customary. God bless the gallant, the generous pioneer squatters of Queensland! I say it, not so much on account of their kindness to me, for they might be supposed to bestow it on account of the office I fill; but the weary traveller, high or low, is sure of a shelter and a hearty welcome to every comfort the station can bestow.

After he had unsaddled and let his horses go loose, our dialogue commenced.

"You look ill. Have you fever and ague?" I asked.

"Very bad, sir; I am on my way to town for advice and change of air."

Here he commenced shivering violently, and I gave him a strong dose of quinine, which, with a hot cup of tea, gave him speedy relief. I sat up till a late hour that night, hearing passages of a life full of adventure and of struggle.

He had been an officer of cavalry, and

had taken an active part under Kossuth, for whom he had boundless enthusiasm. My men had withdrawn to their own camp-fire, out of hearing; so his only auditors were myself and my boy. He was consequently unreserved in his communications. After describing a cavalry skirmish in which he had been wounded and taken prisoner, he proceeded to tell me he escaped in a manner almost miraculous, and landed on English soil without a sixpence in the world.

"Never shall I forget," he said, "the crushing feeling of loneliness which came upon me when night arrived, and when I saw others hurrying, after their daily business, to their happy homes in the crowded city. Weak and hungry, I knew I could not last long, and I laid myself down in an archway to die. The pangs of hunger, however, soon roused me, and I went to a shop and disposed of some of my clothes, whereby I was enabled to live for some days. I went everywhere seeking employment, as teacher of languages, as writing-master, as clerk, as porter, but all in vain. No one would believe my story, no one would employ me without a character. I showed my wounds. I asked shelter until I could produce credentials from Hungary. Fruitless. At last, when literally starving, I roamed into the country. I had never yet begged. I had always offered my services; but now pride began to break down, and I determined to become a mendicant. I approached a country house, and saw a very young man reading in a bow-window which was partly open. Three times I went within a few paces of that window, and three times I turned away, despairing. The young man, meanwhile, never raised his head, being absorbed in his book. Hunger spurred me on. I advanced, and said:

"'Help a poor man, Von Germaner?'"

"The youth looked up, and said, hastily and angrily, 'No.' He was very handsome, and the angry look did not become him.

"Slowly and mournfully I retired; and, I think, for the first time since my exile, tears flowed from my eyes. Hardly had I walked a hundred yards, when I heard a hasty step behind me, and, on turning, I met the young man running without his hat.

"'Stop!' said he; 'I was infernally busy with a choral ode when you spoke to me. Are you really in distress?'"

"'I am a beggar,' I said, bitterly, 'and my words are hollow, of course. The poor are always impostors—in the eyes of the rich.'"

"'There is no of course in it,' he replied; 'hollow! Why, God knows, your cheeks are hollow enough. You are a real foreigner, too, and have read English authors, or you never would have used that word hollow as you did. Are you hungry?'"

"'I have not tasted food for three days and three nights.'"

"'Here!' exclaimed the young fellow, 'wait till I get my hat! Don't move from the spot!' And away he ran towards the house, leaving me wondering at his strange manner.

"In a few seconds he returned, breathless, and led me, with amazing rapidity, to a handsome hotel in the suburbs of the town. With wonderful speed, a substantial meal was placed before me, and he made me swallow a tumbler of excellent sherry before he would allow me to say a word. Evening set in. We drew our chairs near the fire, and I told him the sad history of my country and my own. Never shall I forget the manly sympathy of that noble fellow. When I opened my closely buttoned coat, and showed him the newspaper I wore next my skin to serve as a shirt, he complained that he had got an infernal cold in the head, and commenced poking viciously at the coals in the grate. After a long pause, he said:

"'Do you know any person in England who would be likely to be of service to you?'"

"I said there was a relative of mine, well off, but he lived in a very distant town.

"'Well, now,' said he, 'look here: I am short of money. I have only got five pounds. Could you make your way to him with that?'"

"I told him yes, but that I would rather take a trifle than put him to inconvenience.

"'Inconvenience be hanged!' he said. 'The devil! what is my inconvenience to the make-shift of a newspaper for a shirt?'"

"He would not be refused. I had to take the money, and from that moment all went well with me. I fell in with a captain of one of the Austrian emigrant ships, who gave me a free passage. I became a shepherd in New South Wales, saved money, bought three thousand sheep, began to lose my health, came to Queensland for change, went far into the interior, got the post of subordinate overseer, stayed in that situation until last week, when fever and ague set in, and I am on my way to Rockhampton for medical advice."

"What is your name?" I asked.

"Frederic Wiener."

"No," I said, "your name is Miska Vensirdlen."

He started up from his seat, and peered into my face.

"No," he said, after a pause, "you are not my benefactor. I should know him if age had planted as many wrinkles on his face as there are leaves on this gum-tree. Yet you are like him. And, now that I think of it, the name of the commissioner of this district is the same as his, and you are the commissioner! Great Heaven! you cannot be he!"

"No," I replied; "I wish I were as good a man. He was my only brother. He showed me the letter you sent him before you sailed. You omitted to mention that you paid him the five pounds in little more than a year. I saw the letter of credit."

"Yes, sir, on the Union Bank. But he was surely not surprised on receiving it?"

"He was not; but we were—our family, I mean. We had not seen you. Why did you change your name?"

"All respectable foreigners do so, who look for a return to their native country. Where is your brother now, sir?"

But he had only to look into my face to see the answer there.

"You need not tell me, sir, you need not tell me," he said, in accents of unfeigned sorrow, "that is one of my life's objects gone. Next to the happiness of seeing my native land again, I hoped to see him once more, and show him my gratitude."

Miska (or Michael, in English) stayed with me that night; and, as I had a vacancy in my staff, he agreed to engage in my service, merely to drive my horses while I was surveying and exploring. I knew I should cure him by a discreet use of quinine and chlorodyne, and I succeeded in doing so. Many a tale he told me of Hungary and of Deutschland, and many a happy hour we enjoyed at the camp-fire in the lonely, melancholy bush.

One evening we came to a sheep-station, where we found two shepherds. We were informed by them that, four days back, when only one shepherd lived there, he saw a large mob of blacks at the creek to which he had gone down for water, and which was about a quarter of a mile from his hut. The blacks were all armed with spears, waddies (clubs for throwing), nullah-nullahs (clubs for close combat), boomerangs, and tomahawks. He was without a weapon. They sent forward two or three gins (females) to him, but he waved his hand, said "Yambo" (begone), and they stopped. He then retreated slowly to his hut, got the sheep secured in the yard, fastened the door of the hut, and, having previously possessed himself of his carbine, went off for assistance to the head station, sixteen miles off. An armed party started thence early in the morning, and found that the blacks had dug under the hut, and had taken flour and various other things. They tracked the savages for a long distance, until they came to rocky ridges, very thickly timbered, where they gave up the pursuit.

I had to follow this creek down, and I issued orders that no man of my party should go out of sight of the camp, without a revolver. A few mornings afterwards some of my horses were not to be found, and the men scattered themselves to look for them. All were at last brought in save Miska's. I pushed on with my son to the head station, which was eight miles off, leaving directions with my Chainman to assist Miska. That same evening my party arrived, and camped near the station; but the horses were not yet found. My Chainman came up and reported himself to me, but Miska I did not see that night. Next day was Sunday. About eleven o'clock in the morning I went down to inspect my camp, and found that Miska had set off an hour before, expressing his determination to stay out until he found the animals. He took two or three days' rations, and told my Chainman that he had his "shooting-iron" with him. He did not return that night, and next morning I had to set off with my party to complete the adjustment of boundaries. A good many days elapsed before I returned. In this interim two travellers

saw a body floating in a very long water-hole near the place where I had last camped before I departed. This was the corpse of poor Miska, greatly decomposed, but not sufficiently so to conceal the spear-wound which had robbed him of his life—a coward-thrust in the back.

The word was passed from station to station (there are but few in that remote nook of earth), and in a day or two, eight or nine determined men, mounted on splendid stock-horses, and guided by two tame blacks, were on the death-trail.

For about a mile and a half, their course lay through what is locally called "Old-man Triodia"—a sort of spinifex grass. It covers the whole surface of the ground, and is from three to four feet high. The blades are such strong prickles, that I have doubled thick mole-skin trousers four times—that is, made *eight layers* of the fabric—and yet have passed the spear-blades through them as swiftly as you pass a needle through cambric. But the blacks make their way through this obstruction with facility and speed.

The party now began to approach the water-shed, which in that particular place was very wild and rough. Night drew on, and there was no appearance of the blacks. The traces were fresh. No fear was entertained of failure in coming up with them, and our friends quietly camped beside a rocky water-hole. Next day, at an early hour, they resumed their march.

Suddenly one of the black guides turned back to a squatter, and said, with great glee:

"Cobawn gin like along a billy-bong." (Plenty of gins near a water-hole.)

"Where that fellow, billy-bong?"

"Close up that fellow."

In a few minutes we had surrounded the gins, and the wretched creatures shrank covering to the ground. They were at once secured.

Few white men slaughter gins, no matter how great the provocation. I have scarcely ever known them to be killed unless by mistake. Nevertheless, nothing is better established than the fact that they are infinitely worse than the males, as the instigators and the chief and primary agents of most of the outrages committed by the latter.

Many questions were asked of the gins by the guides, which they answered readily.

Next day the party struck sharp off to the north, over a high range covered with trees, and were surprised to find water in many clefts in the rocks, whereas a drought had prevailed for some time in the low country. It would seem that on this very high ground the spicula of the tree-leaves frequently attract the electricity of the clouds, and thus produce showers which do not reach the lowlands. The stony ground was very severe on the horses, for station-horses are never shod; their hoofs grow even too quickly, and often need paring. When night began to close in, the guides strenuously urged the party not to camp, but to follow them in silence. Some were opposed to this, but gave way; and at

length, after emerging from a pretty thick shrub, they were gratified by the sight of numerous fires in a hollow about a mile off. On a dark night the fires of a camp of black fellows have an imposing effect. Each family have a number of small fire-sticks placed around them. When nearly extinguished, they can fan these up in a moment. I have often seen nothing but tiny sparks here and there, and in less than a minute have seen a mile of blazing lights.

The party tied their fasting horses up, and gave them a few bunches of herbage. They themselves took cold meat and "damper;" they could make no tea, as a fire would be discovered by the enemy.

Half an hour before dawn every man was on his horse, and moving towards the silent camp. Two went round by the right, and two by the left, the rest went straight onward. Very quickly they advanced, and halted for a space, the blacks giving no sign; but at length, the day having now broken, the dogs of the savages began to bark, the blacks bounded to their feet, and found themselves confronted by foes in three directions. With a loud "whoop!" avengers were among them, shooting them down from the distance of a yard. One squatter saw a huge fellow with a map of Queensland (it had belonged to poor Miska) hanging down from his shoulders like an apron. He shot him through "Port Denison," which covered the region of the heart. The savages, seeing there was little chance of escape, whirled their weapons in grim silence. They never think of submitting by word or question, any more than they expect that the "wallabies," on which they feed, will submit to them in the chase. Boomerangs, waddies, spears, flew thickly, but with little effect. A savage, seeing a rider about to cover him with a revolver, rushed forward, and dodged on either side of the horse's head in so surprisingly active a manner, that the rider, who was almost disabled in the left arm, could not fire without danger to the horse. Another squatter, seeing this, rushed forward to decide the affair, when the black suddenly sprang to the horse's tail, and dodged about there, in like manner. It was not without great trouble that he was killed. Another squatter, having pushed a savage hard, the savage suddenly wheeled round and sent a waddy against his enemy's head with such violence as to knock him off his horse. In a moment the tomahawk was raised above the prostrate man; but, with the speed of lightning, the double-trigger "Tranter" was raised too, and with a guttural "owh!" the savage fell dead.

Meanwhile the gins and the picaninnies were flying about, shouting their shrill "e—e—e's," and "ow—ow—ow's," but it was over in a few minutes, and then the avengers began to reckon up their work. Eighteen blacks lay dead, and one picaninny. Fierce gleams flashed from the white men's eyes when they came upon the dead child.

"Who killed this boy?" exclaimed one.

Of course no one had killed him, and, in fact, no one had meant to kill him. The boy had perished by a stray shot in the *mélée*. Very few hurts had been received by the whites. On examining the blacks' camp, almost all of poor Miska's property was found; among other things, his cheque-book, but all the money he had had about him was gone. The picaninnies were taken prisoners by the squatters, and shared among them: certainly a fate for the better in respect of the boys.

From one of these—some months afterwards, when he could speak a little English—I received a mimetic description of Miska's death. The blacks of Queensland generally are perfect mimics. He described Miska walking along with his erect, military bearing; then a sudden stop, and a peering look into the neighbouring scrub, as though he had heard a noise, or seen something suspicious. Then he described the walk renewed, another stop, and a rather frightened look around; then, the sudden consciousness of being "circumvented" by the blacks, who now began to appear from among the trees; then, the quick but bewildered turn to fly; then, a whirr-r-r-r-r, and a boomerang strikes him on the temple; he reels, puts up his hand to wipe off the blinding blood, and sinks slowly to the ground. Then, the rush of the savages (silent as Fate) towards him. He struggles to his feet, and joins his two hands together. Then, came the halt of the wretches about ten yards from him; then, the poisoning of the spear, the hurtling of the missile through the air, the death-cry of my poor friend as it grided through his frame; his falling back, and the protruding spear supporting him for an instant; his rolling half round, and tearing up the grass; then, the blow on the head with a nullah-nullah. All this was shown to me with appalling effect, and, I have no doubt, with perfect accuracy.

THIS AND THAT.

THOUGH often receiving the histrionic invitation to "look on this picture and on that," from the stage, from journals, public orators, and others, I have seldom had an opportunity of contrasting the two generic portraits in so favourable a manner as lately. "*This*," which I went to "look on," was lying in a fair-sized harbour, close to a leading Irish port. Why should I affect mysteriousness in the business, and not say Kingstown? "*That*" was in the leading Irish port itself. Again, why mystery, and not say boldly Dublin?

At Kingstown, lay one of the finest ships of our passenger navy now afloat. She was fresh from the builder, lying there with a vast and solemn dignity, a dark serviceable rudeness, with a plain air of simplicity and work, now the correct tone for our ocean-going vessels. She had upon her a dreamy air of power; a sense that she could move herself with little exertion—a look conveyed mainly by the easy motion of the screw, the perfection of graceful

walking: whereas paddles are as the heavy, plunging, stumbling walk of an awkward woman whose feet are catching in her dress at every step. She looks a vast citadel. Her officers boast that she is next in size to the Great Ship of all. She has all the modern ingenuities. She is steered—not in the old vulgar way—a hapless mariner in a gale, staggering and clinging for the bare life to his wheel, washed, drenched, beaten—but on the most luxurious principles. The steerer has an apartment to himself and his wheel, where he can be quite comfortable and luxurious. He has not to peer out at the end of the ship, but is indifferent about the direction of her head, and gets his information below by mysterious signals. That head of hers he may be directing on to a rock; that is not *his* business. Nor does he convey his impressions to his rudder by the laborious agony of chains; but works by an elegant little series of cog-wheels and levers, which play smoothly, and which “a child could work.” There is a donkey-engine, with a funnel as large as that of a common paddle-steamer, and this faithful servant I find to be as useful as the persecuted animal who serves the costermonger. It warms the ship through and through with hot-air pipes; it sets the sails, gets out the luggage, heaves up the anchor, does any little job that is wanting. I find there are three decks: those below, splendid airy places, eight or nine feet high, vast expanses which would do to drill volunteers or play football in, and which will give accommodation to some thousand or, at a press, twelve hundred emigrants. No more horrors of the middle passage now! We may fancy the genteel passengers on this esplanade, and they will not have need to know that there are twelve hundred plebeians most comfortably bestowed below.

So much for “this” picture; now for “that.”

Within half an hour’s journey was the port of Dublin, crowded with many steamers and vessels. This shape of human life is not unenterprising. The bustle and incident attending on loading and unloading has a dramatic air. The entertainment of seeing a vessel going off never cloy, for the simple reason that the spectacle of human nature never cloy. Here, I see, nearly every day, the embarkation of the pigs—the farce, the pantomime of the entertainment, side-splitting, as is said of a diverting clown. To see those creatures herding together near the gangway, their ears hanging, their snouts to the ground, their strange eyes glancing warily at the men. They have organisation, surely, as the *men kuno*: who, with bated breath and figures narrowly stooped, and now watching this side and now that, with arms spread out, clearly anticipate danger from the little band. And they are right; for here, with a yell of agony, the sally is made, in concert and at all points. The main body is driven back, but half a dozen stragglers escape between the legs of their persecutors, upsetting them. The distraction of these is

infinitely amusing, they not knowing whether to pursue or to stay with the main body. So, too, when the stragglers are at last captured, and are brought back, frightfully yelling as though they felt the knife already in their necks. Though, indeed, it is no wonder that they thus exclaim, for their progress must be painful, seeing that two men drag at a fore-leg, and a second at the two hind-legs. This is the farce or comedy; but the true tragedy is in the embarkation of the hapless beasts who take over good beef for Liverpool and Manchester dinner-tables. They go on board with tortures. We see the scared herds standing about in hundreds, some weary of their long day’s shaking on railways. Unhappy beasts! they are disinclined to further voyaging. Savages about them make a cordon, and drive them towards a slanting gangway, made for their special inconvenience. I have seen thousands of the unhappy brutes put on board at Dublin, and the amount of torture so inflicted daily would, if appraised in some way, or made into a sum-total, be appalling.

At the top of the sloping gangway which leads down to the vessel’s deck, their sufferings may be said to begin, though previously there has been some beating and torturing to get them in a convenient and handy group. When all is ready, and the executioners are at their post, the work begins; shouts, yells, rattles of sticks on ribs, set in, under which pressure some of the foremost are got to the entrance of the gangway. Seeing the unexpected descent, they turn their heads and try to retreat. Then the fury of their tormenters rises. They are driven afresh to the entrance. Their faces, turned away, are beaten, the sticks rattling on their foreheads until the unhappy brutes toss them in perfect agony, and have to turn then to the gangway for escape. One fellow has a tail in his grasp, and, screwing it cleverly and slowly round with exquisite and protracted agony, forces the animal forward. He is well seconded by a coadjutor, who gives a series of sharp “prods” with a stick in that well-known tender corner of the flank where the hind-quarter begins, and where there is a soft place. A third drives his elbow dexterously into another soft place just over the shoulder. Under this inducement the maddened beast plunges forward wildly, staggers down the stage, and would rush frantically into the ship but for a fourth ruffian waiting for him at the bottom, who, dexterously slipping a halter round his horns and twisting the end round a bolt, brings him up “cleverly,” nearly dislocating the neck. I have seen the wild eyes of the poor brute nearly roll from his head, as he endured this agony. The whole has the air of a personal encounter; the men, like savages, engaging a whole herd. Where there is what is considered a peculiarly obstinate brute, the whole force is concentrated on him. A dozen combine to exercise every device of cruelty. There is excitement about it; and when victory comes, which it always does, there is positive exultation. When we

think that the cattle trade is what is called a "staple" of Ireland, and that thousands of cattle are put on board steamers every day in this shocking fashion, and are crammed on the decks, their heads tied down, exposed to awful weather, it is appalling to think of the amount of cruelties such a profitable business entails.

I see a train of these unfortunates thus forced on board. What is the contrast to the stately, gigantic, and all but perfect, American liner lying at Kingstown? From the deck of the liner you can actually see the short stout chimney and obese person, as we may call it, of the older vessel. She is like an old coach beside an express train: with this difference, that the old steamer has not been driven off *its* road yet. She is called the Royal William; and knowing who the William was to whom the compliment was paid, it must be a long time ago since the nautical christening was performed. There she lies—her after-portion as clumsy as an old-fashioned chest of drawers; her bows enormous, burly, and corpulent. She was once upon a time, we have no doubt, considered "the perfection of naval architecture." She is all greasy and black, and as old-fashioned as any old lady in clothes of the cut of the last century. Once, after her successful trip to New York, she carried the mails, and it was considered very luxurious travelling to be tossed in her. She has now come down to these baser uses—carries about cattle. Her predecessor, the Sirius, the first steamer that ever crossed the Atlantic, was an Irish boat also; and it is often told in Liverpool how the owners did not choose to trust their letters to her, but sent them by the regular mail sailing-packet; and how, too, when a strange vessel fell in with her about three days from New York, the mate of the strange vessel came running down to the captain, quite aghast, with news that they would be on shore in a few minutes, for he had seen a steamer!

ROMANCE OF TWEEZUM HALL ACADEMY.

WE all hated Christian Bohné before we knew him. After that, we hated him a little more; for the disappointments inflicted upon us by turning out the chap he did. He was introduced into the school with a flourish of trumpets by Mrs. Normicutt, the doctor's wife. By her own confession, however, she knew nothing of herself about this fellow, and took him entirely on trust, dazzled by a romantic fog that hung about him, through which there glimmered the phantom of a coronet! It was but a phantom, for Christian Bohné, at best, was only the ward of the Lord Viscount Kalydon, and, though singularly like that noble person, was not considered to possess, on that ground, an undoubted right to the succession, or to be styled—as he always was—the "Honourable." It often

bothered us, this resemblance, as it did Christian himself. Christian had not seen his noble guardian half a dozen times in his life, and the likeness, if not mere fancy, must have been the result of pure gratitude and good feeling on his part, and was no doubt appreciated by his lordship at its true value.

Additional expectation, on the part of us juniors, attached to Christian's arrival—from a rumour, traced to Margaret the maid—that his latest abode had been the tropics; a region abounding in diamonds and alligators, gold, ivory, leopards, wild peacocks, monkeys, whales, pomegranates, savages, and humming-birds, heaped in rich confusion. It was calculated that Bohné's experiences—if he should prove communicative—would procure us the luxury of many a sleepless night; and it was a sad blow that he was lodged in an apartment all to himself, where, indeed, it was physically impossible that any less noble presence should invade his privacy, there being only space for the Honourable Mr. Bohné's bed, box, and chair.

The Lord Viscount Kalydon made a considerable sensation in the neighbourhood, owing to an objection started by the prouder of the two proud steeds to being pulled up at the door of a modest suburban mansion. The affability of the English aristocracy is so well known, that it will neither shock nor surprise any one to learn that Lord Kalydon chucked Margaret the maid under the chin, and requested to know whether, in Cheyne-walk, Chelsea, blushes were in season all the year round? The appearance of Mrs. Normicutt on the threshold of the parlour door prevented his lordship's obtaining the desired information. This lady had a way of addressing people as if she were taking them into custody on a very serious charge. In this manner was Lord Kalydon promptly apprehended and lodged in the parlour, Mr. Bohné standing by like an individual labouring under very strong suspicion, but against whom no direct charge is as yet made.

"There, be off, you young rascal, and look at the playground," said his lordship, good humouredly; "you needn't come back." Receiving a pound and a punch on the head, the Honourable Mr. Bohné slunk away.

The interview between the lord and the lady was but brief. Not to receive a whole deputation of peers would the doctor have quitted his schoolroom during morning lessons; so Mrs. Normicutt did the honours, and more. She accompanied his affable lordship to the very door.

On being informed that his tender guardian and relative had departed, Mr. Bohné put his left knuckles into his eye. It was only to keep up appearances; for when he was presently ushered into the schoolroom, no trace of unmanly agitation disturbed his countenance, which was of the brown-yellow tint—not to add flatness—that characterises the battle-dore. His nose seemed to have arrived at its present peculiar form by having been habitually

pressed against a sooty pane. His mouth was wide and protuberant. He had small, gleaming, malignant eyes, like those of a mongoose when it sights a snake. Altogether, the fellow had a carnivorous aspect; inasmuch that, but for an impression that cannibalism was less in vogue than formerly in the tropics, we might have easily persuaded ourselves that the Honourable Mr. Bohné had not been wholly unaddicted to that luxury. As it was, a whisper was considerably passed round to Looby Weekes—a fat chap in the junior class—that he had better avoid the eye of our new schoolfellow, at least till after dinner. Christian was very loose-jointed—tall, awkward, and sprawley—and, when in energetic action, had a way of working all his legs and arms together, like a machine suddenly wound up. He was about fifteen, and in tails; but these were, he confessed, his first, a circumstance his manner of twitching round to see how they followed would have sufficiently betrayed without it.

The doctor introduced him to the two masters, and then, in a few kind words, to us, recommending us to show him the premises, bounds, &c., and, in short, make him perfectly at home. This we did, on the doctor's exit—by forming a motionless and speechless living circle about him, and examining him calmly from head to foot, as if he had been a specimen sent express from the tropics for deposit in a museum of natural history. Mr. Bohné did not resent the scrutiny in the manner his truculent appearance rendered more than probable. He seemed, if anything, rather flattered—"posing" himself for our inspection as if he had been a lay-figure, though not, it must be owned, selecting the attitudes most familiar to the studio. Tacitly responding to the challenge to let us see what he was like, he went through a series of antics, twisting his limbs, cracking his joints—even turning an occasional somersault—all the while preserving the most profound, not to say melancholy, gravity; so that he resembled nothing so much as a depressed baboon, winding up the performances of a long public day. This done, he regained the human form, and, taking out a coin, spun it in the air.

"Crik! he's got a sov.," squeaked a small voice, from the top of a desk.

Mr. Bohné turned on his heel, and executed a slow and lurid wink. It might not have been intentional, but this single gesture so disconcerted Charley Lysons that he slid down into the general company and was seen no more.

"I say, what a jolly lot of fellows you an't!" remarked the new arrival, relapsing into easy affability. "Can't you stump up something to eat? This sort of thing takes it out of a fellow, you know."

"We shall have dinner in two seconds and a fraction," said Snashall Major, who always pined for that festive season, and was invariably first at the board.

"Two seconds will not do," replied Mr. Bohné, with decision. "'To be fed, nourish-

ingly (with licorice, if possible, or, failing that, toffy with almonds and a little ginger), every six minutes while he is growing,' were the directions given by my phys—Ha! that knell! Do, then, these ears deceive me? Nay, 'tis terr-rue. To dinner!"

And stooping down, as if he had been going on all fours, the Honourable Christian made a headlong charge through the circle, in the direction of the dining-room. A most exciting contest ensued—between three—Snashall Major and Ambrose Hall pressing the favourite hard. Nothing else was in the race. Christian made strong running, but was passed both by Snashall and Ambrose, the latter going on second. They arrived in this order to the turn, where Christian, who had run with remarkable patience, called upon himself and gallantly responding, landed first, beating Snashall by a nose.

There was at Tweezum Hall Academy a received idea that Doctor and Mrs. Normicutt lived with their boys. They certainly sat down with us, and, if crumbling bread and playing with a potato means dining, undoubtedly partook of our meal; but something of a more genial character subsequently occurred in the parlour.

The performance of our schoolfellow at this his first dinner did honour to his tropical breeding. He ate like an alligator. Tweezum House was, to do it justice, a liberal establishment. Nobody was stinted. Even when the appetite of Snashall Major began to show signs of languor, Mr. Bohné's was brisk as ever; and when he demanded a fourth supply, the countenance of the patient and esurient doctor exhibited amazement.

Mr. Bohné appeared to be indicating a fifth attack; but this was too much.

"Ohe! jam satis," muttered the doctor; and the banquet came to a close.

"Do they call *this* dinner?" grumbled Christian, as we thronged into the playground. "I call it a swindle. I shall write to Kalydon, and have this put to rights."

Rather to our astonishment, he did write, using an enormous envelope, and securing his epistle with two seals. But it made no difference, the despatch being handed back to Mr. Bohné in the course of the day, opened, but enclosed in a still larger envelope, with *three* seals, inscribed with the doctor's best compliments. Mr. Bohné laughed melodramatically (he had been at the theatre with Lord Kalydon on the previous night, and had witnessed a piece by a popular author, the cast of which included five burglars, a deserter, two convicts, nine bigamists, the usual detectives, and a Jew). Mr. Bohné laughed, I repeat, and observed, in a voice that could only be compared to that of a lion growling through a speaking-trumpet, that "a time would come."

There was no pride about our honourable friend. He entered frankly enough into our habits and pleasures, and there were even some who foretold that he would prove, upon the whole, an acquisition to the commonwealth. It

did not prove so. As his real disposition developed itself, the prejudice we had conceived against him was completely justified. He was as spiteful, savage, and uncertain as the animal he so much resembled; but his two leading peculiarities were his inordinate appetite, and a tendency to transports of passion, the more appalling in their intensity from the slightness of the provocation given. A single word, a mere look, might induce one of his paroxysms, and *then*, my lads, stand clear. Christian would snatch up the first article at hand—no matter of how dangerous a character—a heavy ink-stand, a stone, a knife—and launch it—not intending to miss, but with deadly aim and purpose—at whosoever had affronted him. The escapes I witnessed from some fatal injury were almost miraculous. In the absence of any missile, Christian would fly upon the offender with the rage, and very much the action, of a tiger, and, unless the victim could save himself by flight, or some friend to humanity interposed in time, kicked, tore, and buffeted him as if nothing short of life would satisfy his revenge. For the moment, the boy was like a very fiend. Fortunately, the gust of passion was brief.

It was on one of these occasions that I managed to incur that hatred on the part of Mr. Bohné, whence arose the remarkable incident that forms the subject of my story.

There was, in the lowest junior class, a little creature called Murrell Sillito. He was as pretty as a girl, and being fragile and delicate, was treated among us with as much tenderness as if he had been that twin-sister of whom he was always talking, and who was understood to have vowed self-destruction on finding she would not be allowed to accompany him to school.

Like most pets, Master Murrell would occasionally indulge in pertnesses. These were little heeded. One would as soon have resented the chirp of a tom-tit. Nevertheless, to the horror of the playground, a loud shriek from Murrell, one day, announced that he was in trouble, and the child was seen flying, with all the power of his little bare legs, before Christian, who, with eyes blazing with maniacal rage, and his great mouth agape, pursued him, grasping a large jagged flint in act to throw.

Before any one could interpose, the missile flew, whistling past Murrell's golden curls so close that I almost expected to see them turn red with the child's blood. With increasing fury, Christian caught up a hoopstick, and renewed the chase. Bohné took malignant aim, and was in the very act of flinging, when, panting with speed and excitement, I managed to throw myself in the way. I heard a snarl like that of a wild beast, felt a sharp pain across the brow, and became blind. I was in collision with some one, struck wildly forward, then reeled to the ground. On being picked up, and the blood washed from my eyes, it was shown that I had received a severe graze on the forehead, but nothing worse.

My opponent was less fortunate. My blind blow had done more execution than I intended. As ill-luck would have it, my hoopstick was in

my hand, and the contact between it and Christian's nose so injured that already depressed organ, that the damage proved irreparable, and Mr. Bohné—between whom and myself no remarkable good feeling had before existed—became my deadly foe. Although public taste inclined to the opinion that anything that could befall Christian's nose *must* be for its advantage, that gentleman—attached to, if not positively vain of, this appendage to his face—never forgave the misadventure.

The first time we met in the schoolroom, his now nearly level nose strapped and plaistered, he put his face close to mine, and hissed in my ear:

"I should like to suck your blood. *And I will.*"

These were the last words he ever addressed to me. Regarded as a threat, they made as much impression as might a fly perching on my nose; still, it is never pleasant to be haunted by the undying animosity of a fellow with whom one is perpetually in contact. I therefore made one or two tacit advances towards reconciliation. But in vain. Personally, I had no fear of him; for, though full two years younger, I was strong, and could use my fists.

It might be expected that Murrell Sillito, whose little golden head mine had probably saved, would have shown himself grateful for the interference. This boy, from his affectionate ways, had been my especial favourite—I might say, confidant—for had he not been, since the previous "half," in sole and singular possession of that deep secret of my soul, of which I am about to make wider confession? I was in love! In the full delight of that strange sweet emotion, without sensible beginning, without predicable end—a boy's first passion.

As Murrell was in a similar position (the object of his adoration was a bloated rabbit), it was apt and natural that we should establish relations of mutual confidence. I had never repented of this step. The patience and sympathy of Murrell were absolutely fathomless. Neglecting that constant companion, his whipping-top, of which he was madly fond, he would sit beside me, sucking the highly flavoured eel-skin lash, or thoughtfully rolling the marbles in his pocket, his great blue eyes fixed on mine, as he strove, with all his might, to obtain some faint idea of the feeling that so powerfully wrought within his elder friend.

My acquaintance with—and contemporaneous worship of—the goddess Tseery (so Murrell called and spelled Mademoiselle Desirée Lamond) commenced on a dampish afternoon, when, while stalking round the nearly-deserted playground on my stilts, I heard a slight rustle in the branch of a pear-tree above my head, then a youthful voice, sweet but imperious,

"Hô! le p'tit! Mon volant, zat is, de sut-leecot!" pointing to a feathered object entangled in the tree.

With some deliberation—for I thought the command a trifle unceremonious—I recovered the "sutleecot," and flung it over.

"Le petit!" "Petite" herself. The speaker

was only two, say three years older than I, and this assumption of the authority of age hardly warranted the impert—the imp—— The thought fluttered, died within me, as I looked fairly at the radiant vision that had settled on our humble wall, and was striving with its little white hands (one of which grasped a battledore), and with better fortune than attended Humpty-Dumpty, to maintain its position there.

"Sank you, ze leetle," said the celestial shape. But it did not disappear. On the contrary, it clung more tightly to the happy top of the wall, gazing at me with a mixture of contempt and interest, such as an immortal might feel for one of earthly mould, who was not without agreeable traits. "Are you very bad?"

"Bad!" If quivering with admiration from the topmost hair on my head to the extremity of my preposterous timber legs meant bad, I was in a very precarious condition indeed. I could only gasp and stare, and the goddess continued: "Ze poor leetle! Qu'est ce que tu as fait? Zat is" (her look changing to unmistakable compassion), "why do you this? Is he cruel, your master? Do zey give you mosh wheep?"

"Mademoiselle est Française?" I stammered, parrying the question while I endeavoured to regain my mental and bodily equilibrium. Romeo himself would have been embarrassed on stilts.

"I am not Angleesh," said the radiant presence, frankly, "but I speak him beautiful, quite in the native. Let us see. I am Desirée Lamond, and you, you are leetle Harri—leetle John—how?"

I responded that my name, to the best of my belief, was *not* John How, but Charley Milborne. Then, confused at having contradicted, however justifiably, the first assertion of a goddess, I felt that, if stilts could kneel, I should have assumed that posture, implored forgiveness, and vowed that I was henceforward John Brown, Peter Pips, or anybody she deigned to pronounce me.

"Ah! Miel—Mil—how zat is difficult! I shall call you 'ze Leetl,'" replied the celestial Thing, with sudden decision, and a smile that doubled me up, stilts and all, flung me half way to the clouds, and, catching me as I descended, laid me in a bewildered heap on the ground. There, at least, I found myself, when my senses returned. The perch my goddess had occupied was vacant of her glorious form, and one of my stilts was broken. So was my peace.

The romance struck root, and flourished mightily. The fact that we never met, threw me, more than might otherwise have been the case, upon imagination. She became associated with everything I read—everything I thought of, everything I saw. In study she was my Nymph, my Dryad, my blue-eyed Pallas-Minerva—watchful, though unseen, of her mortal worshipper. In sport, she was the arbitress, dispenser of prizes, and of fame. In gardening I called my rose "Desirée," nursing bud after bud into perfection, in a bewildered hope that one or other of them might reach,

by some arrangement not clearly laid down, what, in confidence to Murrell Sillito, I described as the Paradise of her bosom. In short, though I adopted the language of the broken-hearted, I never was, nay, nor ever shall be, so perfectly content and happy in my life.

See her, however, I did. Once a week—her family attended the same chapel, to which, in a long sinuous column, chattering from its head to its tail—Doctor Normicutt's young friends resorted on the Sabbath. There were two other young ladies, and two ladies who had been younger still, in the Lamondian pew, and Desirée sat at the end nearest ours.

I am sorry to say that this last fact exercised a material influence on my devotions. My eyes, and therewith my thoughts, riveted themselves upon my beautiful mistress, and defied all efforts to dislodge them. For some time she did not seem to recognise her "Leetle." When she did, it was with no encouragement, so to speak. Still, at certain rare intervals, she would, as if in sheer pity of the boyish admiration expressed in my incessant watching, turn her bright face, flash me an impatient but not angry look, as if she said, "There, be satisfied," and return, with double earnestness, to her interrupted orisons. Absurd as it now appears, my life, at this period, dated only by these weekly visions. No sooner had the last flutter of her white dress disappeared down the chapel stairs than I began to count the hours, nay, the very minutes, until another Sunday should restore her to my eyes; and vain would be the attempt to depict the gloom and misery that overwhelmed my soul, when a wet Sunday displayed the Lamond pew a dreary void. With what deadly hatred did I glare at an unfortunate stranger, who, on one of these occasions, was inducted by the pew-opener into the empty seat!

There occurred, after many weeks, one other interview. I was in my little garden, which happened to be in a corner, round the angle formed by a tool-shed, when a voice, that made my heart leap, spoke softly from the top of the wall.

"Pst!" said the celestial sounds. "Say zen, ze Leet'l."

I looked up. It was she!

"Ecoute donc, le p'tit," said the goddess, in a hurried whisper. "Il ne faut pas me regarder comme ça." She threw into her face an intense expression, such, I presume, as mine had been accustomed to wear in gazing at her, as I have described. "Mamma has written to ze doctor. You will walk in stilt." (She evidently held that this was a form of punishment.) "Be also mosh wheep, mon pauvre, oh, mon pauvre!"

The goddess seemed about to cry.

"Oh, stop. Please don't!" said I, as agitated as herself. "Don't mind *me*—that is, yes—I won't—if I may—ah, mademoiselle, do not forbid me *that*." From a subsequent examination of the knees of my light blue trousers when I recovered self-command, I imagine I must have assumed the attitude of supplication.

"Mon Dieu! You wish be wheep?" sobbed the bright one.

"If *you* would weep," I began, confusedly; but, recollecting myself, "I will be whipped twice a day," I went on firmly, "and walk on stilts to my lamentable tomb, so that I may continue to look on you."

The goddess had barely time to flash upon me one of her radiant smiles, when a burst of approaching voices startled her, and she vanished with the suddenness with which the enamelled warbler on the lid of a Geneva snuff-box dives into its little nest of springs. I rubbed my eyes, also my knees, and resumed my spade, but not with the same tranquillity. Our prospects—might I say "our"—were darkening. Her mother had written to the doctor. Now the doctor was particularly sensitive on the score of our demeanour at church. Conscious that he could, himself, see nothing beyond the length of his own nose, he was wont to accept, with distressing alacrity, any report made by other parties to our disfavour. The consequences—next morning—were not agreeable. No matter. I had been assured of the sympathy, witnessed the very tears of the lode-star (whatever that was) of my affections, and surely that should suffice.

Hastening in search of my friend Murrell, I confided to him what had happened, and demanded his advice. Mr. Sillito, being engaged at trap-ball (sides), could not compromise the interests of his party by giving me more of his attention than the intervals of the sport permitted; but, by running backwards and forwards for an earful at a time, contrived to master the subject sufficiently to give it as his decided opinion that the bearing of the goddess Tseery could be construed in no other sense than that of a direct offer of marriage; that she was probably at this very moment making preparations for running away with me; that I had better see what pecuniary means I had at command; and finally, that his (Mr. Sillito's) week's pay (threepence), due on Saturday, was entirely at my disposal, deducting one halfpenny (fine incurred), and another halfpenny debt of honour to Charley Bathurst).

The goddess was propitious to my prayer. On the Sunday following she turned her bright face twice, and looked for an entire second steadily in mine. It was as we sat down at the termination of the hymns. After that, I knew so well that she would do so at those times, and none other, that it seemed like a point of honour to refrain from intermediate watchings.

I was now perfectly content with the situation, and in the seventh heaven of delight. Touching the supposed project of elopement, the goddess—rather to Murrell's dissatisfaction, but with my unqualified approval—made no sign. The temple in which she dwelt, known to mankind in general as Mulberry Lodge, was so near, that I could, at rare and blessed intervals, distinguish the quick flutter of her white dress as she skipped from room to room, occasionally pausing for a moment at the window. These

apparitions I regarded as my especial property. They were, indeed, scarcely perceptible to any but love-sharpened eyes—except, perhaps, Murrell's—whose mysterious "Tseery!" often warned me a moment too late! I could also hear her singing—yes, even through the buzz of the schoolroom (when the windows were open) could I catch the precious strains, wailing over somebody's "portrait charmant."

Things were in this position, when my above-mentioned contest with Christian Bohné made that gentleman my undying foe. His hostility would have been nothing to me but for the form it took. By wiles I was too careless to detect, and never since have thoroughly understood, he contrived to win over to his confidence my small but, as I had imagined, well-selected friend, Murrell Sillito. It must have been through some mysterious fear. It was surely not in human nature to *like* Christian; and Murrell was above a bribe.

All I know is, that Master Sillito gradually cooled towards me. Whenever he could avoid me, without seeming to do it, he did. Our confidential intercourse dwindled to nothing. In the same proportion did Murrell's curious attachment to Christian augment. The boy followed him like a spaniel; and, if they happened to be apart, a mere glance from Christian across the playground would bring Murrell to his side.

Absorbed as I was in dreams of the bright one, Murrell's defection gave me no very serious grief. But how, I one day thought, if he should be treacherous enough to betray my heart-counsels to that beast Bohné? The fear was prophetic. At a later period, I knew that this was Christian's object, from the beginning. He had discovered that a secret of intense interest existed between Sillito and myself, and devoted all his natural cunning to its discovery. He succeeded. Poor Murrell confessed to his inquisitor the general story of my love, but the *name* choked him. Pressed on that material point, he led the Honourable Christian up to the black board upon which, in school-time, the fanciful designs of Euclid were wont to be drawn; thereon, with trembling, guilty fingers, inscribed the fatal word,

"TSEERY,"

and rubbed it out again in an instant.

"'Tseery!'" exclaimed Mr. Bohné. "What sort of game is that? Come, Master Murrell, no nonsense, or——"

There being now literally nothing more to conceal, Mr. Sillito at once added a personal description of the "game" in question, its habits and abode; and, receiving threepence from his questioner, invested the reward of perfidy in a custard tart.

"'Tseery,' eh?" Mr. Bohné had remarked, as they were about to part; "good, my little friend. Then I see my terrible way. I shall set Rabbit on her."

This was accompanied with a look so malignant, that Murrell, shuddering from head to foot with a nameless terror, could only open his blue eyes, and faintly re-echo:

"'Rabbit!'"

"I will suck his best blood!" continued the unchristian Christian. "That's for *him*."

"His b—b—best—" (This epicurism in sanguisuction shocked poor Murrell beyond further speech.)

"As for *you*, my boy, no blabbing of what I may do, or I'll roast you quietly alive, and devour you afterwards. That's a common form of correction for tell-tales in the tropics."

This did not add relish to the custard tart.

Setting "Rabbit" on her was about as explanatory as the witch's declaration that she was bound for Aleppo in a sieve, for the purpose of "doing." But Murrell possessed a clue.

A street-crossing, within fifty yards of Tweezum Hall, was presided over at this period by an elderly person who was worthy to have been the mother of the enterprising witch just mentioned. Her countenance was of a cocoa-nut hue, with yellow rings—to be exact, they were of the colour of the east skin of a python—round the most baleful eye ever seen out of a serpent's head. The body was considerably bent, a circumstance which engendered in her an intense spite against the whole human race. Nevertheless, it paid; imparting to her an air of upward supplication which, combined with the poor wretch's infirmity, drew many a sixpence into her greedy hand.

She had made her appearance, with her broom (perhaps, *upon* it, from Aleppo), about five months since, expelling, without ceremony, an imbecile old gentleman who had reigned peaceably there since crossings were invented. A faint demonstration was made, chiefly by the street-boys, on behalf of the dethroned monarch of the mire. The usurper was christened "Mother Rabbit"—none knew by whom—but it was sufficient that the name seemed to incense the old woman beyond expression, and it was accordingly applied on every favourable occasion. On the whole, however, the impression went abroad that Mother Rabbit was an individual rather to conciliate than offend, and there were not wanting persons of the better class who kept the hideous old woman in good humour by little presents, either in money or in snuff; articles which seemed to hold an equal place in her affections.

For some reason—perhaps the approximation to a certain resemblance between them in complexion and general style—Mother Rabbit, from the first, exhibited tokens of strong predilection for our honourable friend. No sooner was his lank form seen in the distance, towering over the heads of his companions, than Mistress Rabbit's whole demeanour underwent a remarkable change. Leaning on her broom till she had, so to speak, bent herself nearly straight, her fearful eyes distended to the utmost, and her toothless gums displayed in a hideous grin, she would watch his approach as if he were, to her, the only visible object in the world. If he crossed, she attended him so closely, and with so alarming a manifestation of a desire to bestow upon him still more signi-

ficant proofs of her regard, that Mr. Bohné was fain to repulse her in terms more emphatic than ambiguous. Mother Rabbit always shut herself up again, like a dirty fan, and covered away.

Christian's more privileged friends were wont to chaff him on the subject of his conquest. He took it very well; and, although he discountenanced the old hag's public demonstrations, we knew that, by alms and gracious looks furtively bestowed, he fed her lurid preference.

It came to pass that, on a certain Sunday, Desirée's place in the Lamond pew was vacant. I had not seen her flitting past her favourite window during the previous week. I remembered, with something like a heart-throb, that she had looked singularly pale and wistful last Sunday, and had kept her sweet face towards me about two seconds longer than usual. Likewise that, during the last few days, certain half-closed casements, and an unwonted air of quiet about the house, had indicated the presence of illness.

My fears were quickly realised. A neighbouring practitioner, Mr. Borehouse (of course, we called him Boreas), was accustomed to pay a periodical visit to Dr. Normicutt's, chiefly, I believe, to allow of Mrs. N.'s sticking "medical attendance" into the boys' bills. He was a burly, red-faced man, with a jovial and pleasant manner. He was fond of boys, and preferred holding his sanitary inspection in the open playground; where, surrounded by a mob of grinning patients all teeming with health, he would sit for an hour, joking, telling funny stories, and nursing one fat leg after the other, until time compelled him to depart.

On such an occasion, as Boreas, in his kindly, blusterous way, was bidding us farewell, the enthusiasm in his favour found vent in a cheer. He raised his hand quickly.

"Hush, my boys," he said, "I've a little patient not far from hence, whose best chance of recovery depends upon what no human skill seems able to procure for her, quiet, sound sleep. You are gentlemen, and good fellows—and precious noisy at your games sometimes. I say no more."

He had glanced in the direction of the Lamonds' house; but that was not necessary. I knew, somehow, that he meant Desirée. He was moving away, when I followed, and touched his sleeve.

"Is she v—very ill, doctor?" I stammered out, colouring, I was fatally aware, to the roots of my hair.

"Hallo, young fellow!" said the doctor, as if he were detecting my blush in the very act. "Why, yes, my boy, she *is* ill, very ill. And if you can tell us what's the matter with her, you will be a cleverer doctor than any of us."

"Perhaps—perhaps she's in love!" I blurted out.

"Why, you precious young Corydon, what do you know of such matters yet? Love, sir! Love a pudding's end!" ejaculated the doctor.

I replied with sincerity, that upon the whole I preferred a pudding's beginning; but, if I

might take the liberty, if it wasn't love, was it measles?

"She's had 'em, sir," replied Mr. Boreas, thoughtfully, "had 'em, I tell you, had 'em, had 'em," he repeated, with as much seeming earnestness as if he were addressing a brother-practitioner, though, in fact, he was deep in the case.

The school-bell then rang, and we hastened our different ways.

The mysterious illness of the beautiful French girl, whose face at church was so familiar to many of the school, became a topic of general interest. As for me, the mental anxiety I suffered was beyond description. As the days dragged on, bringing us no authentic tidings of her condition, the worst fears beset me. In the playground I dreaded to lift my eyes, lest the windows of the Lamonds' house, utterly closed, should extinguish every hope. We knew, from our own observation, that the road in front had been covered with straw, and learned in some vague manner that every means had been resorted to, to procure that life-bestowing sleep of which the doctor had spoken; but in vain.

At a shop, whose proprietor kept a Bath chair for hire, I learned further, that Desirée, having at her own request been taken out for a few minutes, and been at first greatly revived by the air and movement, was, on returning, reduced to a more distressing condition than before. This was the sadder disappointment, as the poor girl, in natural enjoyment of her improved sensations, had been in high spirits, conversing with friends she met during her little ride, and finally insisting on holding conference with Mother Rabbit herself, on the virtues and properties of snuff. Working this valuable line of information further, it turned out that old Rabbit had been for some time a pensioner of my sweet goddess in the matter of snuff—snuff alone (strange to say, she would accept from her nothing else); and nothing appeared to afford the old woman such supreme delight as flourishing under Desirée's nose a little "tabatière" with which the latter had presented her. On this occasion, Mother Rabbit, in her ecstasy at the reappearance of her young patroness, went through such exercises with her half-open snuff-box, that the invalid, sneezing painfully, had to be taken on.

The misery of suspense began, I think, at this time to affect my health. I could not sleep at night, and abhorring the playground, sat moping in the schoolroom by day. My very appetite flickered out, and I got so wan and pale, that it was no wonder that (as I afterwards heard) Mr. Bohné remarked to his confidant, Murrell:

"Didn't I tell you I would have his blood? I'm doing it."

"Hallo, Corydon," said Mr. Boreas, singling me out at his next visit, "I must have a talk with you."

He walked me down the playground, in which there were only one or two fellows, and asked me doctor's questions.

"Well, I can't see that there's much the matter with you, yet you're not right. D'ye get enough to eat?" (I nodded.) "I don't want another puzzling case on my hands," he added, looking steadily at me.

I snatched at the allusion.

"Doctor, how is Miss—Miss——"

"Lamond? Very, very ill. That is the worst we doctors say."

"Do you mean that——" My heart had given a leap, and now stood still.

The doctor's looks replied to my question.

"And I shall never, *never*, see her again!" I exclaimed; and, regardless of everything else in the world, burst into a passion of tears.

"Hallo, young——," began the astonished Mr. Boreas; but close beside us a small voice said, quietly and timidly:

"TSEERY!"

It was Murrell Sillito, who had crept up to us unnoticed, and was pointing with a trembling finger towards the well-known window. There, in very deed, was visible my poor goddess, tenderly supported between two attendants, while her mother, leaning over from behind, helped the weakened hand to wave a signal of recognition and farewell.

"That's right. Throw away her last chance. Ah! how *dare* you?" cried Mr. Boreas, shaking his clenched fist at the group. "Put her to bed, you (a-hemmed) fools! Are you trying to kill her?"

"No, no. It's *he* that's killing her; *he*," said Murrell, crying bitterly, crimson, apparently, with passion, and stamping with both his little feet, as he pointed to Christian Bohné, who was sauntering in the direction of the house. There was a mark on Murrell's temple, and one of his eyes, which I thought had been swollen by his tears, was blackening as from a blow.

"He!" repeated Mr. Boreas, bewildered. "Bohné killing my patient! What does the boy mean?"

"He *is* doing it; he *said* he'd do it," insisted Murrell. "He has set Rabbit on her."

"Set—Rabbit," gasped the doctor. "What do you mean *now*?"

He turned to me, but I was as much perplexed as himself. Suddenly, however, the thought of Mother Rabbit and her alleged evil eye flashed upon me, and I blurted out some intended explanation of that mystery.

"Evil eye! Evil fig's end," roared the doctor. "I think you're all gone crazy. *Now*, my friends," and, with a menacing gesture, he hurried off to the Lamonds'.

What followed I learned from other sources.

"Insisted" upon going out in the chair, ill as she was, and "insisted" upon being stuck up at the window afterwards!" exclaimed the doctor, soon after entering the house. "Why do you tell me such stuff, nurse? It was your duty to insist too."

Nurse discreetly threw upon her mistress the responsibility of explaining. Mrs. Lamond, with tears, confessed that, seeing the patient a

shade better, she had yielded to the poor child's importunate entreaties to be taken in her chair as far as the crossing—no further—then to be lifted to the window, in hopes of looking an adieu to a little boy whose face she knew.

"To the crossing, eh? Which crossing?" grunted the dissatisfied doctor. "Saint Paul's Churchyard? Mile-end? The Tower?"

"No, no. Not two hundred yards. Mother Rabbit's crossing."

"Rabbit! Mother Rab—And what happened there and then?" asked Mr. Boreas, with curious earnestness.

"My darling had her little chat with the old woman, who is a protégée of hers. Suddenly, however, she became deadly faint, and, you see," sobbed poor Mrs. Lamond, pointing towards the inner room.

"I don't see," muttered the doctor. "Once up, the air should have refreshed her. So, nothing else passed, with—with—"

"The old woman? Nothing. She gave Desirée her grateful blessing, and, as usual, exhibited the little box, full of the snuff my darling gives her."

"Did it make her sneeze?"

"Not that I remember."

"Let me see that snuff," said Mr. Boreas.

There was a packet of it in the chamber. It was fetched. The doctor rubbed, smelled, even tasted it, and finally took a mighty pinch.

"No harm *there*," he said, with decided relish, and turned to re-enter the patient's room. Suddenly pausing, he added, half interrogatively:

"These little excursions to—to the crossing seem to have been usually succeeded by an attack of this kind?"

Mrs. Lamond assented.

"I always detested that old hag," said Mr. Boreas. "She brings us bad luck. Hang me if I don't half believe the popular rumour that credits her with the evil eye!"

He went softly into the chamber, was absent about a minute, came back looking very grave, said to Mrs. Lamond, as he passed through, and as though in continuation of his last speech:

"And hang me if I don't search it to the bottom!"

And went out.

Within a few minutes a court of inquiry was being held in a back room at Dr. Normicutt's, at which were present Dr. and Mrs. N., Mr. Boreas, the Honourable Christian Bohné, Mr. Murrell Sillito, and myself. There was no charge against any one; but a mystery existed, which, Dr. Normicutt politely remarked, it must be the desire of every one present should be dispelled. He invited Mr. Bohné to explain what he had meant by saying that he would, or that he had, "set Rabbit" upon Miss Lamond? Mr. Bohné professed the wildest astonishment. Such an expression conveyed nothing to *his* mind. What upon earth did it mean? Dr. Normicutt desired Mr. Sillito to repeat what he had said.

Murrell did so. Christian roughly denied it;

but the opinion of every hearer was in favour of the child. It seemed to be moreover known that, although Mr. Bohné repulsed the old lady under the public eye, he had been more than once—nay, many times—seen talking to her by stealth. The doctor therefore exhorted him to state, at once, the object of these conversations, throwing out a good-natured hint that his doing so might only hasten the reward fairly due to any works of unobtrusive charity.

Whom the gods doom to destruction they make mad, says the classic proverb. Had Christian Bohné caught at this timely straw he might have been saved. There was nothing to contravene the doctor's suggestion. But Christian lost his temper, and, therewith, his head. He refused any explanation, complained rudely of the whole proceeding, declared that he would not remain two days longer in a house where a pupil, paid for as *he* was, could be subjected to such insulting treatment, and was withdrawing, with the avowed purpose of writing to Lord Kalydon, when the parlour-maid, looking a little flurried and something ruddier than common, made her appearance, and announced:

"Please 'm, Lord Kalydon!"

"Where?"

"In the drom-room, 'm."

"In good time," said Doctor Normicutt. "See his lordship, my dear. Mr. Bohné can accompany you."

But Mr. Bohné showed no inclination to do so. His face had turned as white as its native hue permitted. He stammered something about waiting till he should be sent for, and left the room. The court of inquiry perforce adjourned. It never resumed its sittings, owing to what occurred in (to use parliamentary language) "another place."

Greetings over, Mrs. Normicutt had judged it best to mention to Lord Kalydon the incident that had occurred, and the mysterious expression, from his ward's lips, which had induced Mr. Borehouse to insist upon an inquiry. Much to her surprise, as her narrative proceeded, her visitor's face lost its jovial, not to say reckless, expression. He evinced the most eager and curious interest in the whole story (for Master Sillito had made so clean a breast of it, that my little love-story had come out in full), and, when Mrs. Normicutt concluded, rose and took his hat. His face was white with rage, and, half appalled at the effect of what she had related, Mrs. Normicutt was about to ring, for the purpose of summoning her husband, when Lord Kalydon stopped her.

"I believe, my dear madam," he said, "that I am the person to solve this enigma. Give me five minutes, during which I beg you to remain quietly here, and you shall know if my suspicions be correct. Fortunately I came in a cab, and, no doubt, unnoticed. This Mother Rabbit's crossing is at the end of the next street. Thanks, don't ring. I can find my way."

It was the dinner-hour with Mistress Rabbit,

and that lady, was crouched on an adjacent doorstep, eating something from a wooden bowl. Engaged thus, she did not observe Lord Kalydon, until he stood before her. At the first sound of his voice, the wretched old hag started so convulsively that her bowl flew one way, her broom another, while she herself, cowering in an attitude of abject terror, gazed wildly up into the passion-wrought face of him who had accosted her. It was a public thoroughfare, and the dialogue was necessarily brief.

"You infernal old Jezebel! You thrice (a-hemmed) old witch, why do I find you here? What devil's games have you been playing now? How dared you follow me to England? Was not the provision I was fool enough to make to keep your cursed body and more accursed soul together dependent on your remaining in Africa? Do you know, beast, that you are a murderess, and that I can give you to the hangman."

"Give me, then!" croaked the old hag. "I done it for my boy. I nursed him in his cradle. He was the only thing, man or beast, that ever cared for me. I tried to live without him; but I couldn't. So I hid myself in the sugar-ship, and came after. They couldn't throw me overboard, though some wanted," and she shook her withered fist. "I come *here* because I can see him, even when he don't speak to me, and when he *do*—what wouldn't I do to please him, though twenty was to die? Is *she* dead?" asked the old woman, with horrible eagerness. "The poison wasn't mixed with the snuff so strong as I can do it."

"Peace, you monster," said Lord Kalydon, trembling with rage. "Another word, and I give you to the gallows. Peace, I say, for your voice might change my purpose. You have been faithful in your love to the child you nursed. For *that*, your life is safe for me. Take this" (he put something in her hand) "and begone. If, in five minutes' time, you are still found here, your blood upon your own head."

He turned, and strode away.

"I was right in my surmise," was his explanation to Mrs. Normicutt. "'Mother Rabbit' is an old acquaintance from Cape Coast Castle. She nursed my ward, that boy Christian, for several years, and was a faithful enough servant; but she had the reputation of being a witch, and her knowledge of drugs and deleterious herbs," said his lordship, laughing easily, "rendered her somehow an undesirable inmate. She was dismissed, but found her way hither. I fear that, whether purposely or not, she has mingled with the snuff given her by your kind little French neighbour some of her own compounds, harmless to herself, but perilous, even when only shaken into the air, to organs differently constituted. Every passing recognition of the lovely little benefactor was re-

warded by an invisible cloud of poison. If inquiry be considered necessary, she can be apprehended, and my testimony is at your service."

It was not considered necessary. Mother Rabbit, acting upon my lord's advice, shouldered her broom, and departed; the deposed potentate, slightly more imbecile than before, returning to his throne. No inquiry was made as to her after-residence.

Lord Kalydon carried off Mr. Bohné the same day, consoling us for his loss by obtaining for us a half-holiday.

Tseery rallied wonderfully, and within three weeks her sweet voice was again occasionally audible, her bright pale face glimmering from the window. She was not, however, allowed to go out at present. Meanwhile, the holidays inexorably drew near. I went home, thence to Sandhurst, and, in due time, with my regiment to India.

Seven years thereafter I was once more in London. Being, one Sunday morning, not far from the chapel we used to attend at school, I walked thither, and took my place, not without a glance towards the well-remembered pew. It was tenanted, as I had expected, by strangers; and it was near the close of the service when my eyes, unconsciously returning in that direction, lighted upon Desirée! One glance enabled me to see that she was ten times lovelier than ever. I could not tell if she had recognised me or not. She left the chapel leaning on the arm of a tall man who had accompanied her. Lingered near the entry, I accosted the old pew-opener as she came out, and, after a word or two, asked, as carelessly as I could,

"So, Mademoiselle Lamond is—is married, ha?"

"Not as I've heard on, sir," was the answer.

"But, that gentleman?"

"Oh, sir, 'tis her uncle."

I gave the old lady—she was such a *very* old acquaintance—five shillings.

And the boy's love is the man's; for Tseery is my darling and my wife.

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